Ex Libris,

Theodore M. Ryan

17-256.

$2.00

CONFERENCES FOR YOUNG WOMEN

BY

REV. REYNOLD KUEHNEL

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

JOSEPH F. WAGNER (INC.)
NEW YORK

Nihil Obstat

REMIGIUS LAFORT, S.T.D.

Censor

Imprimatur

✠ JOHN CARDINAL FARLEY

Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 17, 1916

Copyright, 1916, by JOSEPH F. WAGNER (Inc.), New York

PREFACE

WOMAN has a noble work to do, for God, for the State and for herself, and in writing these Conferences it was the author's fond hope to contribute a help, however modest, in properly preparing our young women for the task which God has put in their keeping.

The author has endeavored to apply his experience of many years in parish work to the composition of these Conferences, and they will be found, above all, practical and dealing with actual conditions. They may be thought old-fashioned by some of our young women, but where that is the case, it would, in the author's humble opinion, demonstrate the particular need of these same young women for just such counsels.

That these Conferences for Young Women may be as kindly received as were the author's Conferences for Boys, and that their use may be found an aid in making our young people discern, in the conscientious fulfilment of the duties of their vocation, the means to work their temporal and eternal salvation, for the greater honor and glory of God, is the sincere wish and prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

FEAST OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW, 1916.

P35-4

CONTENTS

		Page
I	The Title "Children of Mary"	1
II	Formation of Character	6
III	Piety	12
IV	The Humble Life	18
V	Simplicity in Dress	23
VI	The Practical Life	29
VII	Mother's Work	35
VIII	The Spirit of Gentleness	41
IX	The Spirit of Charity	46
X	The Spirit of Obedience	52
XI	Modesty	57
XII	Modesty (Continued)	61
XIII	Purity	67
XIV	The Meaning of Vocation	72
XV	Choosing a Vocation	77
XVI	The Calling for the Religious Life	82
XVII	Convent Life	86
XVIII	The Consolation of the Religious Life	90
XIX	Obstacles that Must be Overcome in Choosing the Religious Life	95
XX	True Happiness	99
XXI	Home Life i Home a School	104
XXII	Home Life ii Home a Shelter	110
XXIII	Duties toward Home	115
XXIV	Trust in Home	120
XXV	Danger Signals	125
XXVI	Danger Signals	129

		Page
XXVII	Danger Signals	134
XXVIII	Danger Signals	139
XXIX	Danger Signals	143
XXX	The Dangerous Age	148
XXXI	The Sentimental Age	152
XXXII	The Theatrical Age	157
XXXIII	The Dancing Age	161
XXXIV	The Independent Age	166
XXXV	The Vocation for the Married Life	172
XXXVI	Company Keeping	177
XXXVII	Preparation for Company Keeping	184
XXXVIII	Preparation for Matrimony	190
XXXIX	The Unhappy Choice	196
XL	The Unhappy Choice (Continued)	200
XLI	The Unhappy Choice (Continued)	204
XLII	The Unhappy Choice (Concluded)	210
XLIII	Duration of Courtship	216
XLIV	The Dangers of Courtship	220
XLV	The Dangers of Courtship (Concluded)	225
XLVI	Reasons against Mixed Marriages, i	228
XLVII	Reasons against Mixed Marriages, ii	233
XLVIII	Reasons against Mixed Marriages, iii	237
XLIX	Reasons against Mixed Marriages, iv	241
L	The Ideal Marriage	246

CONFERENCES FOR CHILDREN OF MARY

I. The Title "Children of Mary"

The world offers many titles and honors, in the attainment of which people will gladly sacrifice friends, reputation, and even health. You will find people striving and struggling to win some certain honor, and no sooner have they reached their long cherished ambition than they begin to crave for still higher honors. To attain these higher honors or titles no effort will seem too great, no sacrifice too appalling, because each of these higher honors places the recipient above those who otherwise would ever be their superiors in station. Honors, like riches, determine prestige.

We do not have to go far for examples of glittering generalities, we can find many a sad example of thirst for honors and titles among ourselves. Many a comedy, and not a few tragedies, are being enacted right at home. Does it not strike you as ludicrous that even in a sodality, where the glory of God and the salvation of souls should be the supreme consideration, girls will be found with a big bee buzzing in their bonnets? While the sodality, like any other society, can have but one president, ten or more girls will feel that they should be the leaders. If they are not voted into some office their disappointment grows so acute that they will sometimes try to wreck the entire sodality. If they fail in this, as usually they do, they will quit in disgust, and pose before the whole world as victims and martyrs of a good cause. It may be hard for them to convince the world that they are anything but a disappointed lot of trouble-makers, but they will tell their side of the story so often that they themselves at least will come to believe in their martyrdom.

Whether the officers of a sodality are elected by the members, or appointed by the spiritual adviser, of one thing you may be certain: it will be very rare indeed that the choice will fall to the lot of the least deserving. No country, no society, and no sodality, can afford to have two or more heads. Humanity is so organized that only one can be at the head of any movement. All the rest must obey this one head. One only can lead, the rest must follow.

From this you will understand how silly and foolish the conduct of so many seekers after honors and titles appear to a sober mind. Not every head fits a crown. And yet you will often find that they who least deserve honors and titles will strive after them most. With such people lack of ability is made up by a superabundance of impertinence and they boldly walk in where even angels would fear to tread.

Useless and idle as most efforts after honors and titles must therefore appear to you, there is one title, however, that should fill you with pride. That title is the name CHILD OF MARY.

The world may, indeed, offer many titles and prerogatives, kings may bestow medals and orders, but such honors are like so much tinsel in comparison with the title you bear, "Children of Mary." All the titles and honors the world can give the world can take away. Death will put an end to all worldly honors and titles.

One title, however, is yours, to have and to hold for ever. The world cannot take it from you, no ill fortune can deprive you of it, not even death can rob you of it. This title that is strictly yours for time and eternity is the title of your sodality, Children of Mary. If you should ever forfeit it, which God forbid, the fault would be your own.

And what does this title mean to you?

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

In the first place, it implies a greater honor than the world could ever give you.

If a wealthy family were to adopt a poor child and give it a celebrated name, a grand home and an immense fortune, the honor would indeed be great. That child would at once be raised to a high rank, would be wealthy, sought after, flattered and admired. But supposing that these wealthy foster-parents would meet with misfortune and lose their wealth, home and honor, the child will drop back into its former state of poverty and distress. If for some reason the foster-parents should see fit to deprive that child of all its honors, of wealth and station, the fall will be all the more deplorable.

You are in no such danger with your title of Children of Mary. You hold your title so securely that no amount of ill fortune can deprive you of it.

Again you must keep in mind that the title you bear is no empty word or meaningless phrase; for, while it is true that God is the Father of all mankind, and the ever Blessed Virgin and Mother Mary the mother of all mankind, it is equally true that some enjoy special privileges and rights, just as the Sunday belongs especially to God, although every day and every minute of time belongs to Him.

So you, too, belong to Mary, our Mother, in a special way. All mankind looks up to Mary and calls her by the sweet name of "Mother," but *you,* banded together in this sodality, are her favorite children, you are the objects of her special love and care.

As no honor is without its corresponding responsibility, we are brought face to face with the second consideration in connection with this holy title. The honor indeed is great, but you must live up to it. It bears with it sacred duties.

As Children of Mary you must never forget that, no matter what the number of your years may be, no matter in which direction your future life may be cast, you may at heart be and remain children at all times.

Ever remain as simple as a child in purity, piety and obedience. Our dear Lord Himself admonished His Apostles, and with them, us, that, though we may grow in years, and become aware of the ways of the world, though we must learn the lessons of life and put up with the world as it is, we should at all times remain as simple as doves. Remember, however, that simplicity of heart and mind does not mean ignorance, it means learning and culture plus conformity with the holy Will of God. You may and you should be learned in all things necessary and useful; your manners should be the outward sign of culture and refinement that are within your heart. However, if you were to gain knowledge and culture at the cost of innocence it would be a poor bargain indeed. At the day of judgment it would be far better for you never to have learned how to hold a pen, or read a line, if through their use you should have forfeited your purity of heart and mind. Whatever the world may say to the contrary, certain it is that true culture, learning and refinement can be procured without forfeiting the innocence of heart. Sts. Thomas, Albert the Great, Bernard, Catherine, and thousands of other learned saints, are a telling argument that wisdom and holiness can be made to prosper and flourish side by side.

Education and holiness of life are not meant to antagonize one another, but to aid one another in the attaining of our destiny—the glorifying of God and saving of our immortal soul. Unless you wish to deceive and harm yourselves, never think for a moment that even the most advanced course of education can ever entitle you to lay aside purity of heart and mind, like a dress you have outgrown.

Always remain children in simplicity and purity of mind. And to distinguish you from the world, be and remain Children of Mary. In our Blessed Mother you behold that wonderful "Mirror of Justice," that perfect reflex of all virtues brought to the highest degree of perfection of which human nature, assisted by grace, is capable. Profiting by the study of this most wonderful model, you should learn how to grow in perfection, in order that the resemblance that exists in mother and child will grow more pronounced in you from day to day.

Hence, throughout our conferences that are to follow, we shall consider how, in development of character, in avoiding sin and in the growth of virtue, you should try to resemble your heavenly mother more and more every day.

Need I tell you that on the part of the ever Blessed Virgin and Mother Mary your title is a most solemn pledge of her love and protection? With all due regard for her exalted title, prerogative and honor, and her most intimate relationship with the Most Holy Trinity, she is human. She is human in the highest and holiest meaning of the word. Not the slightest sin nor slightest stain of sin marred her nature, and God Himself, as she passed from His creative hands, exclaimed: "Thou art all fair and no blemish is in thee."

It is human for a mother to love that child most which most tries to be docile and willing. It is no more than human and natural for our heavenly Mother to love those of her children most who show themselves most deserving of her greater love. All that needs to be said, then, is that by your efforts of pleasing our heavenly Mother more and more each day you should become worthy of her special love and protection in life and death.

II. Formation of Character

In all things, my dear girls, as has been said in our very first conference, you should try to resemble your Heavenly Mother. This duty becomes all the more urgent because you bear the name of "Children of Mary."

In building your character, you are indeed fortunate in having such a glorious model to imitate, greater than whom the world has none to show. And, while it is true that we live at another time and place, and while other conditions and problems face us, the early life of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary will forever remain the "Mirror of Justice," the one perfect model of a truly devout life. Though times may vary and ideals change, human nature remains ever the same. The world may drift along with the popular tide, may pursue this fancy and that, may create new ideals, dream of new aspirations, and all to no purpose. Truth, justice and holiness remain ever the same because God, Who is the author and source of all truth, justice and holiness, is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

It should not be difficult to find the correct ideal among the many that are held out to us. Worldly ideals may be ever so alluring, the glitter and tinsel of this world may be ever so captivating, the ideal God places before us will be the true ideal even though a crown of thorns and a cross should overshadow it. In the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Blessed one among women, this ideal of God is brought out in all its beauty and perfection. Like her Divine Son, she, too, can say to us: "An example I have given unto you."

Time was when she was a little girl, when the problems and

trials you meet with were hers to contend with. To imitate such a lofty example you must consider a great honor. Has it ever appeared to you that God honors you by asking you to conform to the grandest and most perfect of all models? Why not prove ourselves worthy of the great honor God bestows upon us? Let us, then, recall the early life of the Blessed Virgin Mary that in your humble way you may pattern your young life according to her perfect example.

Tradition tells us that, whilst still in her most tender years, she was sent to the temple where a school was maintained for little girls. In this institution of the temple little girls were educated in accordance with the needs of the times. The little girls were taught their holy religion, the prophecies regarding the Redeemer who was to come were learned by heart and explained, and in addition to a general education imparted in that school the girls were taught needlework, so that in course of time they would help to make the vestments needed for the service of the altar. From this, then, you can easily understand what the early life of the Blessed Virgin was. Her parents were both saints. Even before she entered the service of the temple they saw to it that their little daughter was brought up in accordance with the holy Will of God. From which you can see that from a little child the Blessed Virgin Mary grew in an atmosphere of piety and simplicity. And here let me tell you what the world would say. The world would say: "That kind of an education might have been good enough for those days long, long ago, but in our age of enlightenment it would not go very far." The world only tries to discover an excuse for the lack of sincerity and piety of to-day. When the Blessed Virgin was a child, the world loved pleasure as much as now; extravagance ran riot then as now; people were misled by false ambition and false

ideals then as now; there were poor people suffering and others lording it over the less fortunate; laughter and tears, joys and sorrow were as much the style then as now. The world has seen many changes but human nature remains the same. Hence, too, the demands of God at the present day do not differ from those of the times that are past. The demands of God are as reasonable to-day as they have been two thousand years ago. The truth, justice and holiness of God does not change like the style in coats, dresses or bonnets.

Imagine a little girl of four years leaving the home of her parents to go to a boarding school, there to live in common with many other girls of a like age. Instead of parents, she has to mind teachers, instead of the liberty and freedom enjoyed beneath the parental roof she must conform to the many rules and regulations that are necessary where many live in common. Study and prayer, work and play, eating and sleeping are regulated by the sign of a bell that not a single minute of the day may be lost.

In such a rigorous way did the Blessed Virgin spend her years of early childhood. Try to picture her to yourself in her study of her holy religion. With what rapt attention she listened to every word of explanation of her holy Faith; she repeated the sacred prophecies word for word about the Divine Redeemer Who was to come until she knew them all by heart. Think of how gladly she went to the temple to pray, how she folded her tiny hands and how she raised up her innocent eyes to the Father Who is in Heaven. Her very work reminded her of God and so she grew up a lily of holiness among the thorns and briars of sin. She left a mother's loving care to be nearer to God, she gladly complied with all the rules and regulations of the temple and school, because in them she recognized the holy Will of God. All these various acts of

piety, obedience and application may seem trifling if considered separately, but added together and performed in a most wonderful way, next to her Divine Son, they brought about the formation of the grandest and holiest character the world has ever seen.

And now you, Children of Mary, ask yourselves whether, in the formation of your character, you are making an effort to resemble our Heavenly Mother.

While God may ask only a few of you to leave parents and home for His sweet sake, you must not forget that even though you remain in the world you are not dispensed from serving Him. Even though you remain in the world you must serve God and Him only. To imitate our Blessed Mother Mary in the years of her tender childhood and to form your character along the lines of her perfection ask yourselves a few questions.

Can you really say that you have a love for prayer? If your parents were to look for you, where would they have to go in order to find you? At what work or play, or in what company would they see you? It is told of the Saints Theresa, Bridget, and Frances of Rome, that, when they were little girls and their mothers wished to find them they had to go to the room of the house that was used as chapel, or to the parish church. These saints, when little girls, thought of nothing else but prayer when they had no other occupation. What do *you* do in your spare time? If you must be fairly driven to say even a short morning and night prayer, and neglect to say even that for little or no reason, and never during the day entertain a single thought about God, you cannot say that you are walking in the footsteps of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Then, too, you must remember that the proof of a pious and saintly life will be found in the promptness and regularity with which you approach the holy Sacraments. If you must be constantly reminded and

urged and coaxed to go to Confession and to receive holy Communion your piety is at a low level, indeed.

Think of how zealously our Heavenly Mother applied herself to the study of her holy religion, how gladly she studied her lessons, how eagerly she attended instructions and sermons and conferences, and then ask yourselves how you are disposed towards learning your holy religion, attending instructions and conferences, and reading books of instruction and edification. Too often the study of the catechism is considered a drudgery, the listening to conferences is looked upon as a waste of time, and spiritual reading as something the saints might indulge in.

If the Blessed Virgin were a little girl living among you, how you would have to feel ashamed and humbled in her holy presence!

Again, consider the occupation of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. She was taught to work with the needle, to help clean the temple, and to keep in order that part of the temple reserved especially for the pupils. With her royal forefather she could exclaim: "O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house and the place where dwelleth Thy glory."

While it is true that you have other occupations, still it would be no more than fitting if you, too, should take a great deal of interest in the beauty and upkeeping of the house of God. Would it not show a beautiful trait in you if some of you were to band together and see to it that our Lord always gets fresh flowers upon His altars? Others might band together and see to it that the altar linens used in the service of the Lord be always spotlessly clean. In all such work you would imitate our Heavenly Mother.

Once your zeal would be directed in the right direction, you would find plenty more work to do.

In every parish there are neglected children; children who, but

for the tender care of such like you, will go wrong in later years because they have not the proper bringing up. Never think or say that such is the work of priests. No priest but would dearly love to help such children along. Unfortunately, however, both these children and their parents purposely avoid the priest and thwart his every effort in their behalf. Then there are backward children who feel discouraged because they cannot keep up with other children. Some of them may live in your very neighborhood, others may be friends or even relatives of you. Gather all such round about you at convenient times and try to help them. If the ever Blessed Virgin were a little girl in your own neighborhood, you would see her perform such works of charity.

From these cursory remarks you will understand how the following of the example of the Blessed Virgin is made easy and practical for you. No miracles are asked of you; you are not expected to perform heroic acts of virtue as did the saints. All that is asked of you is that you perform your every day duties with the zeal and good will of that perfect model of little girls: the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. Oftentimes think of her. Whenever you are in a quandary and do not know what to do, ask yourselves what the Blessed Virgin might have done in your place. If you act as you think she would act, you will build up for yourselves a character that will be the consolation of your parents and your priest, the joy of the angels, and the pride of your Heavenly Mother.

III. Piety

Experience tells us that piety is to be expected more in the girl than in the boy. A boy will naturally be inclined to wildness, to display of strength and even recklessness. A girl is by nature more subdued and inclined to kindness and gentleness. Her emotions tend to express sentiments of which only a tender heart is capable.

If the grace of God is allowed to refine and sanctify the tender traits of the girlish heart, it makes of her a very angel in human form.

Piety is not one of those rare gifts of God, like that of prophecy or healing, which God vouchsafes to a few select souls here and there, but a virtue that we *all* must practise, and that you, Children of Mary, have all the more reason to cultivate because God has made your hearts more tender and loving than the hearts of your brothers. For you, indeed, it should be natural to pray; natural, to think of God, because your hearts are more tender and kind. Nevertheless, you must admit that piety is comparatively rare in our day. In spite of the many natural advantages which your sex has, piety is rare even among girls and women. The world has given us a distorted view of piety, and we have come to take that distorted view for the true meaning of piety. The world despises piety. Hence it tries to make piety appear as repulsive and as unpopular as possible. For that reason, let us sift the prevailing notions about piety to find out which is the mistaken view and which the correct view of piety.

Piety does not mean that we must be continually moaning, whining, or weeping; it does not mean that we must be on our knees day and night; it does not mean that we have to spend all our time

in church; it does not mean that we have to keep the beads running through our fingers all day; it does not mean that we have to have the sad look of an undertaker leading a funeral procession; it does not mean that we have to fast all the year, or make a daily practice of the extraordinary acts of the saints. This is what the world would like to make us believe about piety, to make it seem all the more difficult. Unfortunately, only too many believe the world. For that reason one has often to hear that piety does not agree with the drift of the times; or, that piety and recreation are not in harmony. To give this wrong view support, the statement is made that God did not create us with the view of making life miserable for ourselves, and for others with whom we come in contact.

Every saint of God will gladly agree that God did not create us to make us and our surroundings miserable. But who can justly affirm that piety makes mankind miserable?

True piety consists in living in union with God. God is infinitely happy, cheerful, and serene. Nothing in, beneath or above this whole wide world can for an instant cast a shadow of gloom over the happiness of God. In living a life of true piety we live in union with God. Hence, to some extent,—in so far as it is possible for us to share the happiness of God even in this world—with piety we share even on earth the happiness and serenity of God. You see, then, that, far from meaning gloom, sadness and tears, true piety means the enjoyment of the happiness and peace of God. True piety, then, does not mean any of the unpleasant things the world would like to make us believe. Indeed, it means the only happiness of which we are capable and for which we have been intended.

In creating us, God had in view to share His unbounded happiness with other beings. That we might feel and appreciate this happiness, He endowed us with reason and a feeling, and craving for happi-

ness. God, being the very opposite of selfish, desired to share the happiness that for ever is His. Now, it stands to reason that when God made us for the purpose of sharing *HIS* happiness no other bogus-happiness the world might offer instead can make us as happy, and much less happier, than God can make us. Hence true happiness can be found only in living in union with God, loving the things He loves, despising the things He despises. And this disposition, of living in union with God, is what we call *PIETY*.

From this you understand that piety does not consist in saying a certain variety, or set, of little prayers every day. That is only a part of the whole. True piety consists in making our every thought and word and action a prayer. Such being the meaning of true piety, let us consider the early life of the Blessed Virgin Mary when, as a little girl, she lived in the temple. Her every thought and word and deed were prayers because she constantly lived in the presence of God.

Her duties did not differ from those of other girls who were her classmates. Yet she never needed to be told more than once what what she was to do. Never did she have to receive a reprimand for work poorly done. No one needed to watch her to see whether she would do a given task in a given time. She was not called upon to perform any extraordinary work, but she performed her ordinary work in an extraordinary manner. When it was time to assist at the temple, to be present at sacrifices, she attended the services with all possible devotion. She prayed with all her mind, and heart, and soul. She felt she was beneath the very eye of God. When she was at work, making vestments for the priests, the very garments reminded her of God. When it was time for her to leave work, and attend an instruction in her holy religion, every other thought was dismissed at once, that she might direct all her attention to the

holiest and most important of subjects, the salvation of her soul. Even in play she had God constantly in mind, realizing that play and rest, while necessary for bodily and spiritual welfare, cannot and should not deprive us from union with God, in whom and with whom we shall one day seek eternal rest.

Considering the every-day work of the Blessed Virgin Mary when a little girl, and comparing with it the duties devolving upon you, there is practically no difference between the work done by her and that expected of you. You, it is true, are not brought up within the shadow of the temple, but under the watchful eye of a faithful father and mother. In all other regards, however, your work and her work is the same. Like her, you must study your holy religion. Like her, you must say your prayers, study your lesson at school and at home. Like her, you must help to work in your little, humble way. Instead of working in and for the temple, you are asked to help in humble household duties, must help to sweep and dust and clean. All such work the Blessed Virgin was called upon to do, just like you.

All that needs to be said, then, is that you should perform your work with the same disposition that animated the Blessed Virgin, your model. Tell me, can you say that your every thought and word and action is a constant prayer? What must have been the delight of the heavenly Father in beholding the soul of the ever Blessed Virgin, so full of grace, growing in spiritual loveliness from day to day! What must have been the happiness of Jesus in watching her grow in beauty and holiness who in years hence was to be His holy Mother!

Is your own growth in sanctifying grace such that God takes a special delight and pleasure in beholding you?

When it is time to go to church do not delay a minute, but go

to church gladly in order to be still nearer to God. Banish all worldly thoughts in order to give to God every pulse of your heart. When the time is there to say prayer, like daily prayers, prayers in trials and temptations, it should never be difficult for you to place yourselves in the presence of God. When it is time to study your holy religion, by attending an instruction, by learning the catechism, or lessons from Bible-history, rejoice that you are enabled to learn something more about Almighty God. Think of the many sadly neglected souls who would gladly avail themselves of your opportunities if they were within their reach. When called upon to help in housework, thank God for the opportunity of doing something wherein you find another resemblance with our heavenly Mother.

If you thus cultivate true piety, you will see God in whatever you think, or say, or do. The flower you may hold in your hand speaks to you of the beauty of God. The mountains in the distance tell you of the greatness of God. The very blade of grass, that people step under foot without a thought, speaks to you of the wisdom of God. If we look at things rightly, everything must remind us of God.

Have you ever observed the experiment of placing a piece of paper over the "g" string of a violin? As often as you play a "g" upon any other string that piece of paper on the "g" string will vibrate, while it will remain perfectly quiet when any other note is being played.

In a like manner our souls will almost unconsciously vibrate and remind us of God in whatever we see and hear and feel, if by true piety our souls are properly tuned to things divine. In joy and sorrow, in work and play, God must ever be uppermost in our soul. The sun at day, and the stars at night, must remind us of God.

It remains, therefore, for you, as Children of Mary, to follow

the "Mirror of Justice" in her noble example of piety. Walk constantly in the presence of God. And since we are unable to do anything good of ourselves, let us ask God that through the powerful intercession of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary we may acquire this beautiful virtue of piety.

IV. The Humble Life

My dear Children of Mary:—The better to appreciate the humble life of the Blessed Virgin Mary we must bear in mind that in her own right she was a princess of the royal house of David. She was by no means obliged to be the lowliest of the low, unless by her own selfabasement she preferred to serve rather than have others serve her. The house of David, it is true, was deprived of crown, sceptre, and fortune, yet neither exile nor poverty can cancel a lawful claim to a crown. The parents of the Blessed Virgin were utterly unmindful of their claims to the rights and prerogatives of their royal ancestors, they lived their lowly, hidden life far removed from the turmoil and strife of this world, mindful that the one sacred duty overshadowing all other obligations, is that of serving God faithfully, in whatever condition or circumstance He saw fit to place them.

True to the example of her saintly parents, we find the Blessed Virgin Mary as a little girl in the school of the Temple. We find her there with many other little girls of her own age. We find her doing the same tasks that others were doing. We find her obeying all the rules and regulations the observance of which is necessary for the maintenance of order and justice. We find her serving along with others, instead of being waited upon. Even in her tender years of childhood we find the Blessed Virgin Mary a model of true humility.

Humility, the world will say, is good enough for outcasts, for the fallen and the poor of this world, that they may keep their place and remain beneath the heel of those who wish to climb higher.

For the rest, however, the world considers humility a drawback rather than a help for the furtherance of ambition.

Hence, according to worldly standards, the life of the Blessed Virgin was a failure, while, in the sight of God, it was the most brilliant achievement.

The question, then, that we must solve is: how to make true greatness compatible with true humility.

To determine greatness, we will take the idea of greatness in its highest sense and meaning, and will consider the standard by which God judges greatness,—namely, a holy life; a life, that makes the avoidance of sin and the practise of virtues its highest aim. Whatever victories a man may win over the forces of nature in discoveries and inventions, or whatever victories one man may gain over others by force of arms and strategy, all these pale into insignificance when compared with the victories one gains over one's self. Hence only he is truly great who can conquer himself. And for the attainment of such true greatness humility is not a hindrance but a necessary help. Humility gives us an insight into our weaknesses, and it reveals to us the source of strength upon which we must rely if we would gain that greatest of all victories, —the victory over self. Humility is so necessary to us that without it we resemble a boat without a rudder.

There never was a truly great soul, but humility made it great. We see this exemplified in Mary, the "Mirror of Justice," the highest type of all justice and virtue.

The Old Testament shows us a number of great and saintly women. Such were Sarah, Anna, the mother of the prophet Samuel, Ruth, Judith, Esther, and the mother of the Macchabees.. Still these great women were only figures or shadows of her who was to be "the blessed among all women." The Blessed Virgin was

greater than all of these because her humility was that much more profound. Though she was to be the queen of angels and of saints, she humbly called herself the handmaid of the Lord.

Humility is to the other virtues what the foundation is to the house. The more pretentious a house the deeper must be the foundation. The greater we are to be in the sight of God the more profound must be our humility.

Though all other saints were models of humility in their way, the Blessed Virgin Mary was the model of models whom all generations call blessed. In her veins coursed the royal blood of David. Yet she did not deem it beneath her dignity to perform the work of the temple. She did not fear spoiling the looks of her hands, like so many girls of our own time who will not help their mothers with the washing of dishes for fear it might spoil the looks of their dainty hands. As a princess, the Blessed Virgin Mary had a right to be waited upon. Instead she lowered herself and waited upon others. She might have insisted upon being served by others; yet she bowed her head humbly and received the commands of those who should have obeyed her.

Such was the life of humility practised by the Blessed Virgin Mary as a little girl at the temple, and now let us try to compare your own disposition with her profound humility, to see whether there exists that resemblance and similarity that should exist between mother and child.

Have you any exalted opinion about your fortune, your looks, your talents, or the social standing you enjoy thanks to the position of your parents? If no one else shares such opinion with you, you may take it for granted that you are wrong. In forming an estimate of a person, you may take it for granted that, while one or another may err, the consensus of public opinion will usually

be correct. But let us even suppose that nearly all those who know you admire you for the station you occupy, for the talents you possess, or for your pretty face or clothes. Remember it is God who gave you that face. Sickness may mar your beauty for the rest of your life. Do not for a moment imagine that because God gave you pretty features you can claim the right to be arrogant, or bold, or entice others to sin. There lived a saint years ago, St. Rose of Lima, who purposely disfigured her beautiful features so that no man looking at her might entertain a wrong desire or sinful thought. If people praise or flatter you because you have wealthy and influential parents, pay no heed to such kind of talk. It was God who selected your parents for you. If He had so willed you would have had the poorest of the poor for your parents. If misfortune should overtake your parents the flatterers will be the first ones to gloat over your misfortune. If you are talented, brighter than the average, bear in mind that God entrusted these talents to you. And since the brightest minds have often gone astray, you should take all heed that a like experience may never be yours.

Instead of feeling elated over any preference God may have given you, remember that every such preference means an added duty for you to perform. To whom God has given much, from him or her God will demand much.

There is only one thing in this whole wide world that we may claim as our own, a thing accomplished all by ourselves and that is—sin. Whatever else we are and have, we must attribute to God, who in His grace, and without any merit on our part, has given us certain advantages, spiritual and temporal. And as our poverty is such that we can only claim sin as our own, is it not unreasonable to feel pride in advantages that can be taken from

us as easily as they have been given? The reason why God abhors pride and loves humility is that pride is a lie while humility conveys the truth about our condition. True humility is not a pretended self-abasement meant as a bid for praise, but a plain acknowledgment of our true state. Hence humility stands for truth, and pride for sham.

For that reason, then, you Children of Mary are asked to follow the sublime example of our Blessed Mother Mary. How can you look up to her, the queen of Heaven, the queen of angels and of saints, lowering herself far beneath her royal station, and performing plain duties in the temple and in her household, if you yourselves disdain similar work out of a spirit of false pride!

Granted that each of you has remarkable advantages not given to others, do not forget to thank God for them, for He is the giver. Never be haughty and overbearing towards those less fortunate than yourselves. On the other hand, you must never crawl before others higher than yourselves, for any motive of gain whatsoever. Remain true to God and yourselves, following in a spirit of true humility the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her sublime humility, for the greater glory of God and for the salvation of your souls.

V. Simplicity in Dress

My dear Children of Mary:—Like every other virtue, so will humility seek and find outward expression. The outward expression of humility will consist in simplicity of tastes. The thought you should often dwell upon is this: If the Blessed Virgin Mary were, like you, to-day a girl among girls, would we find her in tastes and style like most girls of the present times?

Times have not changed so much that we must consider extravagance existing in our time only. Two thousand years ago there were Jewish maidens and women whose only care consisted in displaying their rings and jewels to the best advantage. Their thought at day and dream at night was to be the talk of people, the most admired of all the daughters of Eve.

Christian art has given us countless pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is represented as a little girl at the side of her holy mother, St. Ann; she is shown as the holiest of virgins, as the Mother of God, as the Sorrowful Mother, as the Queen of Heaven. Yet it is to be noted that she is never pictured in the height of Jewish fashion of her day. No precious ring adorns her fingers, no elaborate jewelry is found displayed on her dress, no costly laces, no fine feathers. As child, as virgin and as mother, we find her clothed in a simple yet becoming garb. A plain veil is draped about her head and shoulders, a modest dress and mantle falls in dignifying folds over her figure. But, strange to say, that plain garb never suggests the thought of poverty. Plain as she looks, the most bejewelled lady of the land must bow to her and call her the queen of queens, while the poorest of sinners may look up to her full of confidence and call Mary his mother.

If an artist were to portray the Blessed Virgin Mary in the height of Jewish fashion of her day we might take that picture to be Esther or Judith, but never the Mother of God. And why is it that Christian art surrounds the Blessed Virgin Mary with a simplicity that is not only appealing to all, but imposing like the grandeur of an unknown world? Christian art wishes to teach us that grandeur of spirit and beauty of virtue does not consist in the glitter and tinsel over which a silly world goes into rapture, but in simplicity of heart. To prove this assertion Christian art surrounds the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary with simplicity, austere and inspiring. If it is true that we may judge character by dress, the very simplicity of the garb of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Christian art is the key to her life. Somehow the lines of the face, and the drapery and fold of her simple gown reveal the spotless virgin, the tender mother, the refuge of sinners, and the Queen of Heaven. Her eyes are not bold and daring, challenging the admiration of men, and yet her look is that of a queen to whom one willingly pays homage. The plain folds and simple drapery of her gown bespeaks her majesty, every single line proclaiming modesty and virtue.

You, the Children of Mary, should follow the Blessed Mother in her example of simplicity, and never become the slaves of fashion that so often is immodest and audacious. To convey to the world your purity of heart you must not become fashion-plates. There is danger. People might infer the very opposite of what you would wish to appear.

I do not criticize all fashion as such, nor do I want to be looked upon as a faultfinder of the whole world in general and of dress in particular. I do not want to see girls walk about in rags to become the laughing-stock of the town. At the same time, however, I

must remind you that your purpose in life is not simply to follow the fashions that change every twenty-four hours. As to what you should wear and what you should not wear I will suggest that you let your mother have a decisive word in the selection of your dress. As a rule, she will know enough of the ways of the world to tell you what is proper and what is improper and you may safely follow her advice. Where such advice cannot be had, there are three rules the observance of which will save you many a blunder.

The first rule applies to common decency.

In the first place never select a dress which is likely, and which others may intend, to provoke unclean thoughts and desires. Clothes were adopted to shield us from the inclemency of the elements and not as a means of provoking attention and admiration, the end of which is too often bodily and spiritual ruin. Thousands of girls who in the early twenties of their lives die of consumption, might be well and healthy if, instead of following fashions that are a danger to health, they would take proper care of themselves by the wearing of warmer clothing, even though it may not be the height of fashion. But many foolish girls think they can disregard the plain laws of health with impunity. They regret their folly when it is too late.

The second rule concerns judgment.

You should never dress beyond your means. It is folly to put on airs. Those who know of your circumstances will laugh at you for so doing. Those whom you may be able to deceive will sooner or later learn the truth and then have contempt for you.

That reminds me of a certain family. The father died and left an amount of insurance that seemed like a big fortune to the wife and two daughters. The father had worked hard to pay for this insurance, he never took a vacation, just worked and slaved, taking

care that the family never suffered want, that they had enough to eat and drink and clothe themselves, and had a modest, neat little home. After the death of the father, the home was no longer to the taste of the ladies. Not being able to enter the high society of their own town, they sold the old home for a song and took up elegantly furnished apartments in a city where they were total strangers, and where they could put on the airs of rich people. The money, under such conditions, went fast, and, after about two years, it was all gone. Again the mother moved to a place where she was unknown and where she did washing and housecleaning, but the two daughters had become accustomed to the good things of this world, and when their means to enjoy life had vanished, they got into bad company, and I am very much afraid for their welfare in time and eternity.

No doubt you have often seen how poor parents dress up their children more handsomely on week-days than the wealthy dress their children on Sunday. Such parents are absolutely senseless. Many a poor mother is almost breaking her back over the washtub for the one purpose that her daughter may play the fine lady. What benefit will such a girl have from the work of her mother, when down in her heart she despises the mother for her foolishness?

And now there is the third rule: Acquire a good taste in dressing.

No one wants you to look like a scarecrow, nor like a dummy in some elaborate show-window. Let your taste in dress be such that you avoid anything loud or gaudy. You will invariably find that the girl or woman dressed most becomingly will be the one who avoids everything showy or flashy. The dress that calls for no comment will always be the most becoming.

To some of you it may seem strange that this entire conference

is devoted to the question of dress; yet, because dress reveals character, I want you to be very careful in your choice, that no one may think wrong of you. The careless girl who, in place of needle and thread, uses pins to keep her dress together, is found out at the very first look. She may even have a very expensive dress, yet her carelessness cannot be hidden. The tidy and neat girl is likewise discovered at the very first glance. Her dress may not be as expensive as that of the careless girl; yet no one will mistake the one for the other. At the first sight one will also be able to distinguish the proud girl from the modest girl, even though their dresses may be of the same material and make. The extravagant and silly girl need not say a single word to classify herself; her clothing will do that for her.

It is for your own sake, then, that you should be on your guard in the choice and matter of dress, for, if you wish to persevere in piety and simplicity of heart, you must be careful lest people, by your lack of taste and judgment, may get a wrong impression of you. Even a poor girl may dress in a way to give her the stamp of refinement and good breeding, that will ever be a protection for her and a sign of warning to any one evil-minded.

The story is told of a Chinese philosopher who thanked a wealthy lady for the pleasure it afforded him to behold the rare jewels she displayed. The lady had been of the impression that the pleasure of showing those jewels was all her own. Not knowing whether the man who spoke to her was a wise man or a harmless fool, she asked him what reason he had for thanking her. The wise man answered: "Madam, I thank you for seeing and admiring your jewels because that is all the pleasure you can get out of them. Besides that, you have the constant care to preserve these jewels, to guard them against robbers. All this care I know nothing

of and I can admire those jewels without feeling any burden or responsibility."

The man spoke the truth, but he might have mentioned other dangers in which a girl ventures that seeks to attract attention and admiration.

Try, then, to observe these three rules in the matter of dress, and bear in mind that, after all, there is only one garb regarding which we must ever be on our guard. To it we must give all possible care and attention; and this garb is sanctifying grace. If we had as much care to appear lovely and pleasing in the sight of God and of His holy angels as we have so often to please the eye of man, we would come a great deal closer to the model we should strive to imitate, Mary, the "Mirror of Justice."

VI. The Practical Life

My dear Children of Mary: Many a girl wastes her time dreaming idle dreams when she should be applying herself faithfully to the work that will fit her for her actual station in life. She builds castles in the air and fondly dreams that her imaginations will come true. Sentimental novels greatly encourage such dreams. And then comes the time when the air-castles crumble and the poor girl awakens to reality and she finds that real life is altogether different from the fictitious world portrayed in gushy novels. And this girl is likely to find the dreamed-of mansion of gold very much beyond her reach.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, when a girl, did not waste time in idle dreams, but was ever mindful of the duties that were to train her for her future years. She was zealous in learning the domestic sciences so that, after she had completed her studies in the school of the temple, she might be a help to her aged mother, St. Anne.

The early girlhood years of the Blessed Virgin Mary thus teach you to be diligent in performing the duties proper to your state of life and condition. They teach you to look at life as it is, and not as it might be; in other words, to be practical.

Many of you are so situated that you must try and become bread-winners for the family. Where a family is large, and for some reason the income is not sufficient to support the whole family, the older children, boys and girls, must go to work and help with their earnings to support the rest.

In this way we meet with little heroes and heroines whom God and His angels love and admire for their willing effort. The pic-

tures of these little heroes and heroines do not appear in the daily papers, and the world thinks them commonplace. But no matter. It is enough that God knows us and our work. He will reward more abundantly, in His own good time, than the world ever could reward.

I knew a family of which the father and mother died in quick succession, leaving eight children, of which the oldest boy and girl were fifteen and sixteen years, respectively. Neighbors and relatives were profuse in words of sympathy and advice, and that was as far as they could or would go. They arranged to separate the children, putting the smaller ones in an orphan home, while the older ones were to dig for themselves. The oldest boy, however, would not listen to that plan. He had just finished one year in college, for it had been his desire to be a priest. But when the family was bereft of both father and mother he considered it the will of God to give up his studies for a while and to go to work. So he did. His oldest sister became the little mother to her younger brothers and sisters, also doing a little sewing for neighbors in order to add a little to the meagre wages her brother earned. And so this brother and sister worked faithfully to bring up their smaller brothers and sisters. Finally, when the youngest child was fourteen years of age the oldest brother, who had left college for the sake of the old home, went back to finish his studies, and he is now a priest.

Neighbors and relatives were surprised over the common sense this boy and girl showed in their efforts to keep up a home for the smaller children. Of course, you may be sure that that father and mother in Heaven prayed for their children, and that the blessing of God was upon that little household. Everyone admired this boy of fifteen years who worked and managed as though he were

at least ten years older. And the oldest girl was equally heroic in her way. The coat and dress of last year was considered plenty good enough by her, because she kept all her dresses neat and clean. She had no desire for young men's company, never saw the inside of a theatre, never attended a picnic or the like, for the simple reason that she did not want to spend any of the hard-earned money, every penny of which was needed for the support of the home. And she did not feel it was proper for her to allow a young man to spend money upon her since she had no desire to marry, for the time being at least.

It is a credit to the human race that there are such heroes and heroines among us. We are not likely to hear much of them, for they have neither the desire nor the opportunity to advertise themselves.

If all girls had the common sense of this little mother I might leave the rest unsaid. But seeing how prone many are to be giddy and reckless, let us consider some of the practical points of life, and especially of life in the present day.

A great many girls who are expected to contribute to the support of the family are of the impression that if they look out for themselves, and buy their own clothes, they do all that can be expected of them. While it is true that they lessen the family expense by paying for their own clothing and other incidental outlays, it can hardly be justified from the point of charity that they are concerned exclusively about their own comfort while their brothers and sisters are often in want of even the necessities of life.

Again, there are girls who, as soon as they earn their daily bread for themselves, consider the home nothing more than a boarding-house, that may be exchanged for another if in meals or treatment their exactions are not fully complied with.

These girls, after their day's work in store or factory, come home to play the lady—because they pay for all they get! The poor mother remains the drudge and slave of the family, the cook and maid of all work. She must wash and scrub, and above all, must keep the room of her young daughter in apple-pie order because she is being paid for the work! The young lady takes her meal and idles away the evening, she may entertain company, or be taken out to a show or dance.

No one with an ounce of common sense can approve of such a condition. Conduct such as this only breeds selfishness. In wholesome family life, however, there is no place for selfishness. It must be the highest type of charity and sacrifice. If your fathers and mothers were selfish, looking out only for their own comfort and enjoyment, where would your three square meals a day come from? Where would the care come from that you expect in sickness? Where would your shelter and bed come from?

The moment you begin to see that your help is needed in the household do not be stingy; and never look upon home as a boarding-house that you may quit for another any time it pleases you. Never consider your parents your servants, but treat them as your dearest and most loving benefactors. When you see that others of the family need little odds and ends do not spend every penny you earn upon yourself, but try to help, and begin to learn that it is more pleasant to give than to take.

Even where poverty does not exist it is unwise, for many reasons, that you should spend your money for sham jewelry, and for the thousand and one things that the vagaries of fashion make appear indispensable. Supposing that you or your parents should meet with misfortune; that you or your parents, owing to sickness or lack of work, should be deprived of regular income, what will

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

happen if you have squandered all your money as fast as you earned it?

Life in the real world, not the world pictured in gushy books, means service and self-denial, and if you do not accustom yourself to save and to deny yourselves you will very likely be a miserable failure.

There are girls who hanker for everything they see. They cannot voluntarily deny themselves a single pleasure or luxury. When life begins to teach these girls the severe lessons of self-denial they behave like little children to whom a stern mother denies some useless gewgaws.

For your own peace of mind, and for the sake of happiness, never buy all the things you might buy, and never desire to take part in every pleasure. You can get along very easily without them. And here I want to warn you of the dangers of the installment plan. You read of how you may buy jewelry, clothing, furniture and all that, at so much per week. The frailty of human nature is played upon most cleverly. The advertisements tell you that one needs not be rich to have jewels, stylish clothing and other luxuries of wealthy people. They tell you that even the poorest can be supplied with all the rich have at so much per week. All of which is a snare to catch the pennies of the people. Many a girl allured by these advertisements will be paying for some sham jewelry on the installment plan, only to learn that if she wanted to sell it she could not get one half of what she has paid for it. She is in need of a dress, but she cannot have it because she has to continue her installments or lose all she has paid before.

Learn the lessons of self-denial. Deprive yourselves even of things you might have. There may come a time when you will be called upon to deny yourselves something you badly need but

cannot afford to buy. If you learn this lesson in time life will not appear so hard when trials come.

Be practical, therefore. Learn to take things as they are, not as they might be or as you would want them to be.

If people only realized how much good we can do by depriving ourselves of something unnecessary to give to others some of the necessities of life, they could not be as hard-hearted and selfish as so often they are.

We have a beautiful example of charity in the little girl who asked her father to give her the money instead of the gold watch he wished to give her for her first Holy Communion. Curious to know what she would do with the money, her father did as she asked. When he inquired what she had done with the money he was told that she had bought a Communion dress for a girl whose poor mother was unable to buy the dress. Do you not think that this kindly and unselfish act gave this good girl by far greater joy than the costly watch could have given her? And the poor girl she made happy surely offered up fervent prayers for her, and God must have bestowed His special graces upon this good girl to reward her for this self-denial and act of charity.

Try to realize that the Blessed Virgin was at one time a girl of your own age. Remember that she was always willing to perform her every-day duties as she saw them. And pray that you, as her children, may be worthy of so holy a mother.

VII. Mother's Work

My dear Children of Mary: You had hardly passed the stage of babyhood when you began playing the mother. You had to have a little doll upon which you bestowed all your love and affection. As you grew older you had to have small dishes and pots and a tiny stove to imitate your mother in her household work. You would make little pies for your dolly, set a little table for her with your tiny plates and cups and saucers, and entertain your little doll as though it could talk and act. Besides the little stoves and pots, you had perhaps a little washboard for the precious clothes of your doll-baby.

Now that these times of playful work are past, are you anxious to imitate your mother in her work in a practical way, thereby lessening the burden that must seem ever harder to her with increasing years? When your mothers watched over your play as little girls, in their hearts they harbored the wish that one day those tiny hands would be strong and willing to help them in their daily toil. And you, like all little children, you promised your mothers how you would help them work and bear the burden; you told them that one day you would be strong and work for them, that they might sit down and rest for their share of work while you were little. In that happy talk of childhood your mothers felt they were repaid for all the work and worry they underwent for your sweet sake. Your mothers, God bless them, heard that childish talk and looked forward to a golden future when their trembling hands might rest and their loving heart rejoice in their grown-up children, the pride and consolation of their declining years. But how those fond hopes are often shattered! Many a mother thinks of the time when her

child made such glowing promises as of a happy dream that never came true! Promises were made and broken, hopes raised and shattered. I hope and pray that at least none of you made a mother's heart bleed from a wound that is not healed in this life.

If it were possible for us to see the home of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her holy parents, if it were given to us to see this most loving and dutiful of daughters lessening the duties of an aged and saintly mother, what a beautiful household we should have before us! Would you think it possible even for a moment that the Blessed Virgin Mary sat down to rest and doing nothing while the good Saint Anne was at her housework? And yet how many girls of the present time are afraid to help their mothers washing dishes, for fear their dainty hands might be spoiled. It matters little how much spoiled the hands of mother may be; they may be wrinkled and callous from work; but the hands of the young lady must be as dainty as the wax hands of a clothes dummy in a window of a dry-goods store. Dishwater is bad for the hands. It makes them wrinkly, the kitchen soap roughens the skin so that one can hardly get enough cold cream to make good the injury. Also the holding of the scrub-brush ruins the fair hands of the young lady. The handling of a broom detracts from the graceful curves of the arm. So what can the poor girl do! Must she sacrifice her beauty by common labor? And the outcome is that such dainty girls let their mothers do all this work; mother must understand that such work is beneath the dignity of her daughter.

Even girls who go to shops and factories and help in supporting the family should never consider it beneath their dignity to help mother in her household duties when they come home from work. Remember, your mother is not your servant-girl. To play the lady while your mother sets the table does not look fair. You may say

that you are tired from your day's work. But do you suppose that your mother has been resting all day? And if you are tired from your work, have you not reason to think that your mother, too, is tired from her work? Your mother is the older of you two, and you should bear in mind that she ought to have the rest she deserves before you can lay a claim to rest.

Do not make the fatal mistake of thinking that household work is a disgrace. Of all the work, it is *the* work that makes a heaven of the humblest home. Only a few years from now you may consider seriously the problem of making a home for yourselves. None of you working-girls have the intention of doing for the remainder of your lives the work you now do. Ask any of the older girls, no matter how much they may earn at present, whether it is their wish to continue in the work they do at present; if they wish to be honest they will say that the first opportunity they have of starting a home for themselves you are welcome to the place they now hold. The duties and the work of a household are, after all, the natural vocation for the majority of your sex.

With the exception of some girls whom God gives another vocation, the family life is the common vocation of woman; it is the life for which she is especially fitted; and the life that will preeminently respond to your wishes for a happy future.

But it is one thing to wish for that happy future and another to prepare yourselves for it effectively.

Try to think for a moment what it means to make a home cozy and neat. In your homes you see the rooms kept neat and clean, the linen is spotlessly white, the dishes shine, the kitchen is clean, the furniture looks as bright as though it had just been brought from the store, an air of coziness and cheerfulness pervades the house. Imagine what this same home would be if your mother

did not know how to handle a broom, or feared that she would ruin the dainty lines of her hands by immersing them in soapsuds; how would the kitchen, the bed-rooms, the dining-room appear if your mother considered the work of the household a disgrace! The furniture of a home may be ever so expensive, rugs, pictures and carpets and draperies ever so elaborate—if a mother lacks the experience and taste of arranging them properly, and caring for them properly, they will never spread the air of coziness and cheer. The father may provide the best the market affords—if the mother does not know how to properly prepare the food, who will want to eat it? If the mother is careless and extravagant in the management of household affairs the family will never make headway. The father may work and slave from morning to night, and never be able to save a penny against a rainy day.

You see, then, how much depends upon the mother of the home. You see what one day will be expected of you. The question is now: How will you be able to learn all this?

Unfortunately, it is true that many a girl at the age of eighteen or twenty is unable to mend a stocking, to sew a button on her clothes, to sweep a room or make a bed. Very few are able to prepare a plain meal, and hardly any know what they are to do, or avoid, in ordinary cases of sickness.

Some of you may ask: Where can all such knowledge be acquired? There *is* a school for such training. That school is—the home, and the teacher is—your mother.

Therefore, in helping mother in her daily household duties you not only help to take some of the burdens off her shoulders, but at the same time you learn the lessons so necessary for you to know, when the time comes for you to establish a home of your own.

To *learn* a mother's work you will have to *do* a mother's work, under a mother's guidance. Whatever else your occupation may be at day, don't fear to put on an apron to help mother when you get home. It is for your own good. Above all, I want to say a word of warning to girls who take up higher studies. Not that I begrudge you the opportunities of learning. Learn music, and china painting, and all the arts and sciences your means, talents and opportunities offer to you. But do not think that for the sake of the music-roll or the armful of books you are better than another girl, who for lack of opportunity is bound to go to a factory to work. A little learning is always a dangerous thing. Conceit and a disdain for real work usually go with it.

Learn all the sciences you may, but remember that the cooking of a good steak is a more important science than any other so far as *you* are concerned. Study the arts, but remember that the art of making a home homelike is the greatest art *you* can learn.

Even though it should not be your vocation to acquire a home of your own, an adequate knowledge of household work will never be a drawback to the work God has in view for you. Whether you remain in the world and lead a single life, or whether you spend the years of your life behind convent walls, the knowledge of that work will never be a hindrance to your success. But if God has called you to be in due time the mother of a home, that knowledge of household duties will be an absolute necessity. Indeed, the time will come when you will derive more solace and comfort from the ability to prepare a good meal, than from all the fine arts.

No matter, then, what you may be occupied with for the greater part of the day, help your mother in her work as you get home from school or work.

As a shining model for yourselves you have only to look up to

the Blessed Virgin Mary. If ordinary household duties have not been beneath the dignity of the Queen of angels and of saints, they should certainly not be disdained by you.

Remember that you owe it to God, to yourselves, and to those whom God may place in your care, to learn how to make home a little heaven on earth. And the sooner and the better you learn this great lesson from your own mother, by helping her in those same duties, the better it will be for you and for those whose welfare and happiness will be placed in your keeping.

VIII. The Spirit of Gentleness

My dear Children of Mary: If it were possible to have a correct picture of the Blessed Lady when she was a girl of your own age, we would, no doubt, be held in awe and admiration by the spirit of gentleness that found expression in the look of her eyes and in her general demeanor.

Gentleness is so important that we consider it an indispensable part of a grand and noble womanly character. Beauty of face and figure, unless enobled and enriched by the spirit of gentleness, is but a hollow mockery and a sham, while the plainest face and figure and in the plainest dress, if enobled by gentleness, assume a grandeur and beauty that instinctively remind one of God's holy angels. You see, then, how important it is for you to cultivate gentleness if you wish to make your own that beauty of soul which God intends you to have. This spirit of gentleness is important not only for yourselves, but for all those with whom you come in contact. By being angels of gentleness you help to bring all those around you up to a higher level. The world becomes better for your living in it. It was this spirit of gentleness of the ever Blessed Virgin that spread hope and sunshine wherever she went. As her children, you, too, should try by gentleness to spread good-will and kindness, cheerfulness and patience round about you. To be angels among men, that is your mission on earth.

And now you will want to know in what gentleness really consists.

To get a correct idea of gentleness, we will have to distinguish it from a counterfeit variety that oftentimes passes for the genuine.

Gentleness does not consist in affectation or sentimentality or a

display of infatuation at the sight of some rare breed of cat or of a hairless Mexican pup. Gentleness does not consist in dreaming over a gushy novel with a hero of blue eyes and beautiful mustache. It does not consist in crying over sad poetry. Gentleness does not mean an excess of some emotions but the proper control of all of them. Hence true gentleness consists in directing and controlling our emotions along right channels. Thus they become a proper guide for our thoughts, words, and actions.

To permit our emotions to carry us away would be like trusting ourselves to a boat that has neither sails, nor rudder, nor oars. What the end of such a journey would be no man can foresee. In all probability that journey would end in disaster.

Gentleness, then, far from being a weakness, really stands for strength of character since it means the control of emotions. And you know that it requires strength for the control of all things. The greater the control we exercise the greater the amount of strength required.

A few examples will bear out this point.

A gentle girl will hear unkind remarks about herself. Instead of giving full sway to emotions of anger, she will control herself and give a smile of pity as an answer. A gentle girl will turn wrath into kindness. A gentle girl will not grow hysterical over a homeless cat and forget the many children and babes without homes. The pity and sympathy of the gentle girl will always be turned in the proper direction, and she will offer and give help where it will do the greatest amount of good, without feeling the yearning of having her picture in the "society column" of the Sunday newspaper. A gentle girl will show joy without growing boisterous, and feel grief without making everybody else feel miserable.

Neither men nor women have any love for a soft, girlish boy. Nor have they any feeling of kindness or of attachment for a girl, who, judging from her ways and manner, should have come into this world as a boy. There is no admiration for the loud, boisterous, bold girl. Hence you must cultivate a tenderness and sweetness of disposition that stamps you with the seal of perfect womanhood; that will make you the sunshine of your homes. And to cultivate such spirit of gentleness you will have to remove first of all the obstacles you find in the way. Foremost among these obstacles you may find your predominant fault. The examination of your conscience, the advice of your mother and, at times, even the unkind remarks of companions, finding fault with the ways you have, will give you an idea of what faults must be overcome to clear the way for gentleness. Your predominant fault may be a too hasty tongue, speaking faster than your heart dictates. Count your unkind words some day. At the same time, count also your kind words, and see which predominate. That you feel the hurt of unkind words goes without saying. Bury them in a corner of your heart and over the grave of these unkind words plant the flower of forgiveness. God will see that flower grow and bless you for it. Again, it may be that you are too outspoken, that you mention your likes and dislikes regardless of the feelings of others. There is usually nothing gained by such conduct while much is lost. It may be that you are set in your ways, regarding your attitude as strength of character, while your best friends may tell you candidly that it is only stubbornness.

Whatever the obstacles may be that prevent you from being gentle and sweet, pluck them out of your heart.

Then, with the obstacles removed, begin to cultivate the spirit of gentleness. The rules that apply to the practice of all other virtues

apply to the acquisition of this virtue. The grace of God acquired by prayer and the frequent reception of the Sacraments, will help us to profit by every opportunity offered us to practice this virtue. It devolves upon us to repress all unbecoming expressions of feeling, of boisterousness and boldness in speech or conduct, and to practice meekness and an even temper, no matter what may be said or done by others. Subdue even your grief over the loss of trifles, or over the demise of a dog or cat.

There are girls who show more tenderness for a dog than for a helpless child. The Christian should, indeed, show kindness even to the brute creation: but his mercy must not stop there. It must be exercised chiefly for God's children, our own brethren, for whom Christ shed His precious Blood as much as He did for us.

And even in the display of our tenderness towards the poor and needy we should show discretion and tact. A basket of groceries will always be more acceptable than a bouquet of flowers. The poor are often sensitive about their condition. Hence you must employ tact in helping them. Works of charity, promoted by tenderness, should be given without blare of trumpets. Whenever your judgment tells you that it would be prudent to make your offering unknown, do so. God knows of it and that should be enough for you.

Nearly every parish in cities has a branch of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and it would be advisable to inform such a society if you know of any case where help is necessary. The society will be better able to help than you individually. What you can do is this: You girls ought to form one or more groups and help such an organization by giving to it whatever you can spare of your own belongings. You may have clothing which you no longer wear. Make it over and give it to that society. You may have old books

and magazines,—I mean, of course, good Catholic books and magazines. Gather them and give them to that society. They will be passed around to the sick where they will indeed be appreciated. There may be in your neighborhood girls of your age, or even smaller than you, who grow up like heathens. Parents knowing nothing of religion permit them to grow up in ignorance. Take them to church with you, especially if they ask that favor of you. Suggest it to them. As a rule, they will be only too glad. Give them a catechism, a prayerbook, a book of instruction. They will read it far more eagerly than you imagine. The world outside of us hungers and thirsts for the word of God. The priest, who would be too glad to help them, will often be avoided by them until they know something of religion.

You see, then, that if you cultivate true gentleness of character you can do untold good without show or ostentation of any kind.

It is within your power to be the sunshine of your home, to be angels on earth, to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, if you are truly gentle of heart.

IX. The Spirit of Charity

My dear Children of Mary: At the wedding feast to which our Blessed Mother accompanied her Divine Son, she gave us an admirable example of the spirit of charity that enlivened her every thought, word, and action. The young couple giving the feast were poor. Possibly more guests came than they had counted on, and the embarrassment of these poor people, when they saw that their provisions were insufficient, can be imagined. Our Blessed Lady saw all this without having to be told. She pitied the embarrassment of these young people. It was not necessary for them to appeal to the "Virgin most powerful," because true Christian charity does not wait to be persuaded into giving. The Blessed Virgin, herself, was the poorest of the poor. Yet she knew of a way whereby she would be able to help at once. She would simply ask her Divine Son to help, for she knew that He was almighty and that He would not refuse her a favor. Our dear Saviour, although He had not chosen this wedding for the occasion of His first miracle, loved His mother too fondly to deny her such a favor. And so He changed His plans for the sake of pleasing His mother.

What the plans of our Lord might have been we are unable to say. But, though His hour had not as yet come to manifest Himself, He did manifest His divine power at the request of His blessed mother.

It is true, we have nothing like a complete history of the early childhood of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. But this one example of her charity is enough for us to say safely that, being "full of grace" from the very beginning of her existence, she was the very soul of charity from childhood on. Judging from this one example

at Cana, her charity was so great that she even anticipated the wants of others. She was not only charitable in a general way, helping those who came to her, but helped also those who, from modesty or shyness, hesitated in making their wants known to her.

We, too, should cultivate this degree of charity. If we must be begged and implored, even repeatedly, before we will help, our charity amounts to very little. We must begin to learn that it is more blessed to give than to receive. When we throw a bone to a dog to stop its begging, that act can hardly be called charity, for the reason that we give something for which we have no use and give that perhaps with ill will. To really practise charity we must be willing to do without something we might rightfully enjoy ourselves, in order to give it to others more in need of it. Such was the charity of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary.

It is told of St. Joseph Labre that he often gave the bread he begged for himself to others who were hungry. He went hungry that others might eat.

To such heroic charity I would like you to aspire, so that you may resemble our Blessed Mother more and more each day. To give only a few crumbs of superfluous things, and then only sparingly, with airs as though you gave half a fortune, may be called by any name you like—but not by the sweet name of charity.

That our charity may not be simply what the world calls philanthropy, we must bear in mind that all our acts of real charity, whether of thoughts, words or deeds, must be performed with the intention of showing forth our love for God. To perform any work of charity for any other motive, such as worldly praise, self-love or self-interest, robs it of all reward in the life to come. If we do good only to those who do good to us, we do not differ from the pagans who did acts of kindness and of charity

to those from whom they expected a return in kind. We Christians should not ask unnecessary questions in doing kind works. We need not inquire whether the person in whose behalf we are performing a work of charity is Catholic, Jew, Protestant, or pagan. We need not inquire whether we shall receive thanks for it or not, whether it will be advertised, whether the world will approve of it, or anything like that. Our motive must at all times and solely be the love of God.

Do not be stingy or small in the performance of charitable deeds. For wealthy people to give only a few pennies for a charitable cause is an insult to God, and also to the poor. Indeed, the poor are often more generous in giving than are their wealthy brethren, and in the sight of God and His angels the hard-earned pennies of the poor will have more merit than the gift of a wealthy person. Between the wealth given us by Almighty God and the amount of our alms there must be a certain proportion. The more God has given us in His bounty, the more we are obliged to give of this to the poor.

The world, unfortunately, looks upon charity as an optional matter. Justice, it easily understands, is applicable to all. But, while it may glory in well advertised philanthropy, it has only a limited idea of what true charity means. Worldly people will set a monument for a dead horse while, within a block or two of their homes, there may be a dozen starving children forsaken by all the world. The erection of a monument for a pet dog will be widely advertised and admired, but the wail of hungry children is not heeded.

Often we hear wealthy people boast of the fact that they "earned" all they possess. Let others, they say, go and do likewise. Let them work and save; they have the same chance.

Such argument does not absolve any one from the duty of charity. After all it is not we who earn, but God, who gives us special blessing. God gave to those wealthy people strength, health, and opportunities, not vouchsaved to all. Hence, as God has given to them more than to others, they are bound to be generous with others in proportion as God was generous with them. God, the source of charity, wishes us to resemble Him in our small way. He wishes us to share the things we have received with those who are less fortunate, so that by our imitation of His unbounded charity the things of this world might be equalized to some extent. Charity, therefore, is not a matter of choice with us, but a matter of duty, in proportion as God has perhaps endowed us with more than He has given to others. No man is excused from practising charity. There are none so poor who will not find others poorer still, people for whom even a dry crust of bread will mean the rescue from starvation.

You will understand now that in the building of your character you must not overlook the practice of charity. Make charity part and parcel of your very being. When you contemplate what favors God has given you for time and eternity, it should not be hard for you to do your share for others who have been less fortunate than you.

Be at all times generous, and be quick in doing kind deeds. Whenever an opportunity presents itself to you of doing a work of charity, do it at once, use your prudence, but do not wait to be asked and begged. I need hardly tell you that you should avoid publicity. That is understood. The motive of charity must at all times be the love of God.

It remains for me to direct your attention also to the works of spiritual mercy. We do a good work by feeding the hungry, by

clothing the poor, but we must stop there. These people often suffer even still more need in their souls. Poor people may appeal to you and ask for help. They may be in need of food, clothing, shelter, or work. At the same time their soul may be in need. It may be that they live in mortal sin, that they have stayed away from church for years, it may be that they know nothing of God, that they were brought up as heathens, although they have perhaps been baptized. The soul being of more value than the body, it is even more important to help them in their spiritual than in their bodily wants. Others are not in any bodily or temporal want, but their souls are starving. Pray for the conversion of such, if you can do nothing else. If you are fairly certain that your advice would be appreciated, help along all you can. Give to such people Catholic papers, magazines, and books that explain the Catholic truths. Bring them with you to church that they may hear sermons. The bringing of Protestants and of unbelievers into a Catholic church, into the real presence of our dear Lord, has often been the beginning of a conversion. Needless to say, our dear Lord has a way of His own in dealing from the throne of the Tabernacle with such souls. He will speak to them as you or I could not speak.

I recall the incident of a Catholic young lady who took one of her girls friends to church with her, a Protestant. This girl experienced a peculiar sensation during her prayers at Benediction. She did not tell her Catholic friend of the odd sensation she had felt in saying her prayers, because she could not explain it. She visited after that her own church a number of times, trying to pray as fervently as she had prayed in the Catholic church, but she felt the lack of the consolation that she experienced when she entered the Catholic church. From that time on she visited the

Catholic church even when there was no service, and without acquainting her friend of these visits. Finally, when she felt that she longed for a thorough knowledge of the Church that appealed to her so intensely, she asked her Catholic friend for books explaining the Catholic Faith. After reading them she called upon the parish priest of that church and asked for further instructions. That happened many years ago. At present this lady is the mother superior of a convent of the Good Shepherd in one of our large cities.

The Catholic girl never thought that the fact of her bringing one of her friends to church would end in a conversion and in a call to the life of the convent. But such it was. Countless similar cases might here be told if time would permit.

This one case, however, should be an encouragement to you.

Never overlook opportunities of practising works of spiritual mercy. Leave it to our dear Lord to have His own way of speaking to souls that you can induce to listen to Him. With so many opportunities of performing works of corporal and spiritual mercy we would surely injure our own cause of salvation if we neglected them.

X. The Spirit of Obedience

My dear Children of Mary: In these days, as probably never before, the world strives after independence from all laws, human and Divine. Every restraint is considered a burden and imposition. The world does not like even to hear the word "authority," and the passing whim craving a pleasure here and a gain there becomes for the worldly the only rule of action. Ever since the fall of the angels there have in various ages been rebellious times, but at no time was there so much cunning and strategy employed to make the revolt against all authority seem so plausible and lawful. This contest will continue till the end of time when, at last, the final judgment will forever decide the victory of God over Satan. Fortunately, this revolt against all laws of God and man is not universal. While many join the revolt against God and authority, there are, thank God, many others who, like St. Michael, proclaim, "Who is like God?" Obedience is for them not one of the lost arts. Their most admirable example of obedience is the ever Blessed Virgin Mary.

In this conference we will consider the virtue of obedience as practised by our Heavenly Mother, the better to understand this virtue and the better to follow it. When the ever Blessed Virgin was a girl of your age she was most sublime in her childlike obedience. Her obedience had attained remarkable perfection because with it she combined profound humility. Humility reveals to us our true position towards God, a position of utter dependence upon Him. And this conviction brings out the true relationship between God and ourselves, and, love entering our hearts, we are moved to say, "Abba, Father."

In our helplessness we cling to God and call Him Father. And He in turn, beholding His own image and likeness in us in spite of our imperfection, loves us for the very sake of our helplessness, and mercifully calls us His children. Parents who have a number of children love all of them. But if one among these children happens to be crippled or sickly, the helplessness of that poor child will prompt parents to love that child even more than the rest. They realize that this child will have a harder battle to fight than the others, that perhaps it will be knocked around in the world by people bereft of feeling, and so the parents have more love and compassion for that unfortunate child than for the children who are sound and healthy. That may explain to some extent why God calls the more perfect beings, the angels, His servants, while He calls us, who are beset with tribulations, His children. This relationship existing between God and us shows, too, that to obey a God who is kindness itself cannot be an irksome duty, but must be a pleasure and a consolation.

Only the proud of heart consider themselves too great to bow to God. They have an altogether wrong idea of their position towards God. The truly humble will need no inducement to submit to the holy will of God. They are happy if, by submitting to God's holy will, not out of any motive of fear of punishment but for very love for Him, they can show how they appreciate His unbounded mercy. The humble of heart recognize their position towards God too well to need any motive but gratitude and love, because He has loved them first. Where love promotes obedience, love renders it also a sweet yoke and a light burden.

The obedience of the ever Blessed Virgin was so profound, her feeling of dependence upon God so sincere, that when there was offered to her the highest honor that was within the giving of even

God Himself, she humbly called herself "the handmaid of the Lord." Being called to become the Mother of God and the Queen of angels and saints, she considers herself the lowest of all servants of God.

To avoid the pitfalls besetting your lives you must endeavor to look at obedience in its true light.

From earliest childhood on you are bidden to be obedient. If obedience ever seemed irksome and unbearable to you it was because you failed to understand that obedience seeks in love and humility its foundation. Without these two virtues obedience becomes the whip swung over the backs of slaves.

It may happen occasionally that you will be unable to see the reason of a command you are given. It is not necessary that you should. All that is necessary is that you obey and that you trust your parents because of their experience and knowledge. A general does not tell his soldiers why they must march to this place and that. They obey without asking the reason, trusting in the ability of their leader. Even if parents could explain to their children the reasons for various commands, the children would not always or not fully understand. What you need to understand is that you are dependent upon your parents for your life and support. That fact should make it clear that it is not your parents' part to be obedient to you, but that you must be obedient to your parents. Again, your parents never make you obey for the mere fun they might see in commanding or in forbidding. Their only motive in asking you to conform to their will is your own welfare. If you obey them you benefit yourselves; if you fail to obey you harm yourselves. Many times the parents must be stern in forbidding some certain action because, loving their child so sincerely, they cannot bear to see the child harmed if they are able

to prevent it. Parental authority finds its source and strength in love. Therefore, considering the position of yourselves towards your parents, obedience to them should never seem irksome to you. Considering that the reward of faithful obedience is your temporal and spiritual welfare, there can no longer be any doubt as to the reasons that should make obedience a duty and pleasure for you. As love prompts the parent to command, love should prompt the child to obey.

The obedience we must yield to parental authority is a picture of the obedience we owe to almighty God, and there are even more reasons why we must obey God.

We must bear in mind that He is the most loving of Fathers. We may study every one of the commandments of God, and no matter from what angle we look at them, we find that by keeping them we promote our own welfare, both for time and for eternity. It is true that the glory of God is one of the reasons underlying all the commandments of God. But even the seeking of the glory of God abounds to our own glory and reward. God is not a strange being or a being who is foreign to us. We are by adoption the children of God. Hence the more eager we are to promote the glory of God, our Father in Heaven, the more we contribute to the glory that is proper to His children.

Then we have only to think what and who we are. Whatever we are, whatever we have, we owe to God. We owe to God every breath we take. Had it not been for His holy will we should not even have our existence. Whatever good we expect for time and for eternity can only come from God. Without His help we cannot move even an eyelash, so utterly are we dependent upon God for all we have and are. If, then, we wish to act like reasonable beings, what else remains for us to do but to acknowledge this helpless-

ness on our part, and humbly submit to the holy will of God. We must realize that this great and almighty God is our loving Father and that He loves us for the sake of our helplessness. His laws and commands are not made to grind us, or hurt us, but their aim is that by complying with them we work out our true temporal and eternal destiny, the happiness of being with Him for all eternity and sharing His glory and His home,—Heaven.

Whenever, then, you hear others boast about having shaken off the dreadful yoke of obedience, about doing as they please and how they please, remember that they are not acting in accordance with the dictates of common sense, that they have no true conception of their position.

Let us cultivate the virtue of obedience in the spirit of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. The yoke of God is sweet, and His burden is light—if we bear in mind who God is and who we are.

XI. Modesty

My Dear Children of Mary: Modesty is so necessary that without it character would be like a house built on sand. Modesty is the wall that surrounds and protects purity. Weaken this wall and purity will soon have to surrender. Modesty is, so to speak, a visible guardian angel protecting the purity of the heart; it is like a shield upon which the darts of vice glance off without harming the purity of heart protected by that shield.

You see, then, that for the preservation of purity you must practise modesty. The virtue of modesty is best described by the way it manifests itself, for, like all other virtues, it makes itself known by its actions

At first sight a modest girl can be distinguished from one that does not know modesty. Modesty will make itself known in the way a girl dresses. Two girls may dress alike, yet one may at first sight be known as modest while the other will betray her lack of modesty. Two girls may have exactly the same features, yet one will have modesty written across her forehead, while the other will appear bold and daring. Modesty is at once recognized in a subdued and gentle tone of the voice. It will reveal itself in deportment, walk and speech.

The spirit of worldliness of our times is a great enemy of modesty. God is a lover of pure souls. The world holds such up to ridicule, and the better to gain its purpose it makes modesty appear as an undue restraint and hindrance to earthly happiness. At the same time, the world holds up impudence and boldness as the source of all enjoyment of life. We know that it is impossible for the glitter and tinsel of this world to be a reality: yet we are often

misled by it. Had we been made only for this world, no doubt, the world would be able to satisfy our every longing. But we were made for God and hence the craving of our hearts is for things which the world *cannot* give. The craving within us for a lasting happiness is so great that only God can satisfy it.

If you had been given a very precious stone, one worth the fortune of a king, you would be expected to retain the jewel no matter how much you were offered for it. Supposing the jewel were worth a half million dollars, yet you were to sell it for five cents, could you blame people for saying that you must be insane to part with such a precious jewel for a few pennies?

Purity of heart is worth a great deal more than all the money in the world. How foolish it is to sell that priceless jewel for a momentary bad thought, or word or deed! All the tears of the world will never be able to restore the innocence once lost.

In building up a girl's character, modesty is one of the most necessary helps. Hence your mothers tried to train you along proper lines of conduct from the time you began to walk and talk. When you came to the use of reason your soul was as pure as the newly fallen snow. You knew not of evil. You were guarded that you might neither see nor hear anything wicked. And so you grew up, like lilies among thorns. As your intelligence broadened and widened, the watchful eye of a mother was over you, and modesty began to spread her roots in your soul, until, with the help of God, it was firmly established as part and parcel of your very selves.

And now you have reached the age where it depends largely upon yourselves to preserve this flower of modesty. In the preservation of this angelic virtue you must ever bear in mind the lessons you received in your earliest childhood. The lessons that were true then are no less true now. The things regarding which you were

warned then, are just as harmful and wrong to-day. Live up to these early instructions and all the forces of hell cannot make you fall.

Unfortunately, worldly people, being estranged from God, cannot bear to see themselves in their fallen condition without desiring to drag others into the mire of sin with them. The sight of a pure soul is a source of shame and humiliation to them. When they see a pure girl, or young woman, they actually long for the fall of another angel. Hence the world is never so active and eager as when it tries to wreck and ruin one of the pure souls that are the delight of God and His Angels. Nor is the world miserly in its arguments. It employs every possible pretext to make us waver in our ideas of right and wrong. Whatever can make evil attractive and virtue ludicrous is made use of. Plays and novels, pictures and songs, the daily press, popular magazines, and the moving-picture shows, all are brought into play to make sin look pardonable and even fascinating. Nothing is left undone to undermine modesty, and unless we are constantly on our guard and bear in mind the lessons received in early childhood, we shall feel the dread and horror of sin in us grow dimmer and dimmer, until we grow so indifferent to virtue that even the vilest sin begins to show a charm. Our early training will rebel against this new way of looking at things: but temptations grow too strong—at least, so we make ourselves believe—and the fall is only a question of time.

You see, then, how necessary it is for us to be constantly on our guard, so that the dread of mortal sin, and of sins against holy purity especially, may ever be growing in us instead of diminishing.

When a city is in danger of being captured by an enemy, the defending army, in order to defend the city properly, will advance from the city in every direction and there draw up the lines. After

these lines are fortified the army goes still further out to draw lines where the first assault will be met. The enemy will have to capture not only one but a half dozen or more fortifications before he will have the city at his mercy.

In a similar manner modesty defends the stronghold of the pure soul by putting up fortifications on all sides. If the enemy of pure souls wishes to attack the purity of heart, he will first of all have to batter down the forts that modesty has put up in defense of purity. So long as, with the grace of God, these forts remain unconquered, purity of heart and mind will be safe from all harm. But if the forts erected by modesty surrender, then purity will be at the mercy of the enemy.

It is the task of modesty to erect and to equip these various fortifications protecting the purity of heart.

In the following conference we will consider at length the various fortifications which modesty must build around purity, and the proper precautions against the most deadly attacks of the evil one.

Let our prayer to-day be to the ever Blessed Virgin that we may be helped by her intercession and by her noble example to always maintain the modesty becoming to her children.

XII. Modesty—*(Continued)*

My dear Children of Mary: Having compared modesty to a chain of fortifications necessary for the defense of the purity of heart, we may now proceed to explain these fortifications, erected by modesty, that you may learn how to make a successful defense of purity of heart.

The various fortifications modesty erects to protect purity are to be found in our senses. If the senses are well guarded the soul will be safe.

First there are your eyes that must be fortified by modesty.

Guard your eyes. Keep them watchful for danger. And having discovered it, be on your guard, lest the danger overtake you. It is told of St. Aloysius that he never looked at the face of any woman excepting his mother. A girl walking along boldly and looking in the eye every man she meets is in great danger of losing her purity of heart, if indeed it is not already lost. Shun books and plays you would not want your mother to see. You can take it for granted that they are not good for you if they are not good enough for your mother.

Take notice of the expression of the eyes of the Blessed Virgin the next time you see her picture or statue. You will find that her eyes are either turned heavenward, to express the longing of the soul to be with God, or they are cast down to teach us that we must guard our eyes if we wish to preserve modesty. Only when the Blessed Virgin is shown with the Divine Infant, her eyes will be directed towards Him to show her great love for Jesus, and her willingness to intercede with Him in our necessities. There is but one exception I recall of all pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

and that is the Sistine Madonna, whose eyes have a mysterious, far away look. Its eye is neither heavenward nor is it downcast. It is the eye of a prophetess looking into the future, as though seeing there the vast multitudes of people who will rally around the standard of her Divine Son. Let then the eyes of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, as seen in her pictures and statues, be a lesson to you to keep your eyes at all times under control. Curb the curiosity of the eyes. The world will not perish if you do not see everything. There is no need of reading every book or seeing every play, even though some of your friends may think so.

Another sense protected by your modesty is your hearing.

Recall again to mind the various pictures and statues you have seen of the ever Blessed Virgin. You will find a shawl draped around her head, hiding her hair and her ears. Christian art aims to give us a lesson in this symbolism. We are given to understand that the Blessed Virgin Mary did not have her ears open to listen to all that was said. Following her example, you, too, must not wish to listen to all things that are said. Indeed, the less you hear of the wickedness that is now rampant, the better for you. It is said of St. Stanislaus that he fainted away whenever he heard an immodest word. His brother, Paul, was the very opposite. When the two brothers studied at Vienna, St. Stanislaus was called a saint even then. Whenever Stanislaus approached and the conversation was not the purest, one of Paul's companion's would say: "Change the subject, the saint is coming." Foul talk would cease whenever Stanislaus came near because his brother and his companions knew he would not tolerate such talk. Indeed, the saint avoided the frivolous companions of his brother whenever he could. The one brother, the modest one, is now honored all over the world as a great saint. His example is called in every language a model of

conduct. Who would ever think of his brother, Paul, or who would ever think of considering his life an example worthy of imitation?

Imitate the example of this saint. Never permit a single filthy word to be uttered in your presence. Give people to understand that you have no liking for doubtful and vulgar jests. When people know that such jokes are not pleasing to you, they will generally admire you for the courage you show in expressing your conviction. And supposing that some people may laugh at you or say you are old-fashioned or the like, supposing you are ridiculed, would you not rather be in the place of St. Stanislaus than in the place of his brother Paul? Most people, appreciating the righteousness of your conviction, will at least be decent in your presence. If they are not, keep away from them excepting where your work makes it necessary to associate with them. If you hold your ground and guard your ears well, you will, with the help of God, be kept from all harm, even as Daniel was protected against harm in the den of lions.

Your tongue is another sense that must be guarded.

A French statesman has said that language was made not to express but to conceal our thoughts. In truth, it is never prudent to say all we know. Nor is it necessary to lie in order to conceal our thoughts. We should have the tact to keep silent if we have reasonable fear that a certain word of ours might hurt. An old-time saying is: Silence is golden.

Never say a single nasty or double-meaning word. A remark that you would consider wrong within the hearing of your mother leave unsaid, even though your mother is not listening. Such remarks are also out of place within the hearing of God and of His angels. Never repeat vulgar and coarse jests. Sometimes you may observe girls whispering something to each other that others

may not hear. The fact that remarks have to be whispered makes them suspicious. If the conversation is honorable and decent there will be no necessity for whispering. Things that cannot be spoken of except in whispers had far better be left unsaid because whispering does not make right what is wrong.

You are often warned to keep away from bad company. Bad company corrupts good manners. And I hope that none of you will be bad company for others of the sodality.

Remember also that all your actions must be modest. Even when you are alone be at all times modest with yourselves, bearing in mind that our bodies are the living temples of God, and that God sees you at all times.

There are people who have a mistaken view of modesty, and they see sin where there is none. It is no offense against modesty to keep your bodies clean if you do it with proper regard to modesty. God made our body, and if it was not beneath His holiness and dignity to create it, there can certainly be no sin in keeping that body and all its parts healthy and clean. As far as health and cleanliness are concerned, there is no wrong in taking proper care of our bodies. Things that are sinful take place outside of and contrary to that necessity. It is not necessary here to dwell on actions you must avoid. God forbids them and punishes them more terribly than any other sin.

And now there is another stronghold where modesty must govern, the imagination.

The imagination, if rightly trained, is one of the greatest helps to urge us on to noble deeds. But, if we permit our imagination to run wild, it becomes a dreadful curse. Fire is one of the greatest blessings if kept within control. When fire gets beyond control, however, it is one of the most destructive scourges of mankind.

Now you will ask, how are we to control and direct our imagination, and the answer is: Feed it with truth and not with delusion.

Why is it that little girls, still going to school, are pondering over the looks of their future husband? Why will they dream strange dreams all day, and neglect their work? Why is it that girlish play has no longer charm for them? Why are they dull and indifferent? The truth is they have filled their little silly heads with the delusions they gathered from trashy stories and novels. Their imagination has been so saturated with cheap romance that these girls fairly rave about their wonderful heroes. The poor things imagine that some prince or millionaire is waiting for a chance to fall upon his knees before them, and all such rubbish, and, of course, what's the use of working?

Feed your imagination on truth! I do not say that all novel reading is of evil. A *good* novel, read after we have done our necessary work, is often a great treat. But if you were to eat nothing but sweet dessert, you would soon undermine your health. And novel reading, if done to excess, will have a similar harmful effect upon your mind. If the work you have to do leaves you some time to read, it will be better for you to read the life of some saint. You can find more instruction in the life of St. Francis Xavier, or St. Francis de Sales, or of St. Elisabeth of Hungary, and even far more interesting reading, than in many a popular novel. Then we have Catholic magazines to cater to the tastes of Catholic people. We have good books, instructing us in our holy Faith or leading us on to a more perfect life. Unfortunately, in many Catholic homes these books are laden with the dust of ages, while sensational novels show all the signs of diligent reading.

Nourish your imagination with truth, for a well-directed imagination will be of greatest help to you in fostering lofty ideals and

noble aims. It will open up to you God's beautiful world, it will show you virtue in the beauty with which God clothes it, and will make you disdain the glitter and tinsel of this erring world that is so apt to mislead us, if imagination gets beyond the control of modesty.

XIII. Purity

My Dear Children of Mary: The story is told of a saint who set out upon a journey and was allowed to see his guardian angel at his side. As they proceeded on their way they met a distinguished knight and his followers. The knight's sword and shield sparkled with precious stones and his armor was set with gold and silver, and all who met the knight paid him homage. The saint noticed to his astonishment that the guardian angel turned his face away from the knight in horror and disgust. The saint and his angel soon after passed a corpse. The smell of the decomposing body was so repulsive that the saint was compelled to hurry past, but he was surprised that the angel showed signs of being pleased. The saint then asked the angel how it was that he showed disgust at the splendor of the knight, while he seemed charmed at the sight of the hideous corpse. And the angel told the saint that he had turned away from the gallant knight because the soul of the knight was in mortal sin. The angel could not bear to see the havoc of sin and the desecration of the image of God. Gold and jewels might deceive people, but these outward marks of beauty could never condone for the ravages of sin. The corpse was a distressing sight for the saint, but the angel beheld that this body had been free of the contamination of sin, a living temple of God, and the soul was in heaven with God.

This little story shows us the two ways of looking at people and things. The fact that the world honors and admires certain people is no sign that God will look at them in the same way. And there are people whom the world despises, maligns and persecutes. Yet this is no sign that God will reject these people. They are often the ones whom He will take in His loving arms and call blessed.

It has always been the rule for the world to despise, hate, slander, and persecute pure and saintly souls. The world has no respect for saintly souls. He who wishes to lead a pious life is often marked as a victim upon which abuse may be heaped with impunity. The world will say of saintly souls that they are either hypocritical or mildly insane. These saintly souls will be called fools, their best intentions, their best efforts, will be turned and twisted to make them appear the opposite of what they were intended to be. Of a good and devout girl the gossipers will say: Look at Miss So-and-so, that girl wants to be dreadfully pious. She receives Communion twice a week! I wonder whether she really is as good as she pretends." And so the comment goes. Such is the talk that you will have said about yourselves, if for the love of God you want to keep your heart and mind pure. But what, after all, does it matter what the world may say of us, how much the world may hate us and slander us, if only God is satisfied with us. The world will have its little say and pass away. God remains forever. So does His good will and His praise and reward. Hence it matters very little whether our conduct is in harmony with the views of the world. Not the world but God will be our *final* Judge. Bear in mind, then, that, no matter how much the world may be ridiculing purity of heart and mind, it is God, and not the world, whom we are made to please.

And now, let me ask you, what is our way of looking at things and people? Do we follow the world in her way, or do we follow the standard of God? What do we esteem more: the glitter and tinsel of this world, the applause and approval of this world, or the grace of God? The common-sense way will be for us to love what God loves, to hate what God hates. Like God, we, too,

should love purity of heart and, like Him, hate sin. Above all other virtues, however, God prizes purity. He says of Himself that He is the lover of chaste souls. Of all virtues it is the one that brings us nearest to God. It is the one virtue that makes us excel even the angels of God. The angels, not having a body and being without a leaning toward sin, cannot fully realize what struggles and sacrifices a pure soul must endure to remain pure. Hence you see that if we keep our souls pure in spite of many obstacles, our merit for purity must be greater than even that of the angels.

As to the meaning of purity, it is derived from the word *pure*. We speak of pure gold, if an article, like a ring or bracelet, contains nothing but gold. We speak of pure foods when they are undeteriorated in their original substance. We speak of pure air if it contains nothing in the way of germs or poisonous gases that would contaminate the air. In a similar manner we speak of a pure soul, a pure heart, a pure mind, meaning thereby one not defiled by the contamination of sin. A brass ring with a little gold plating is not pure gold. It may look like gold, but an acid test, and a little wear, will soon show that it is brass. So also will no superficial pretense make us pure in the sight of God.

When in Baptism we were reborn through the water and the Holy Ghost, we were *pure*, that is, free from any tarnish of sin. Our souls were as sinless and free from stain as the angels. In that state of innocence we grew up to the dawn of reason. Then, some time after, it may have been years, someone gave us the first lesson in sin. An unchaste thought, or desire, or a bad word, may have been the result of that lesson and with it that original purity of the soul was lost.

To remain as God made us after Baptism, we must keep away from every word, every thought and deed, that are contrary to

what God demands of us. In order to be always on the safe side make it a rule to confide even your secret thoughts to your mother. She should know all you do and think. Your mother will advise you in all things necessary. At no time should a girl have a secret she will not confide to her mother.

In order to preserve this purity of heart and mind we must have the help of God. Without God we can do nothing: with Him, we can do all things. And the help of God is obtained by prayer and by the frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments. When prayer becomes irksome to a girl, and the receiving of Holy Communion is neglected by her, there is usually something wrong.

The saints of the Church advise three means for the preservation of holy purity. The first is to have a childlike devotion to the noblest example of purity, the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. Such a devotion to her does not consist in saying a certain little prayer each day, but in the desire and the constant effort to imitate her in the grandest of all her virtues—purity.

Secondly we must always walk in the presence of God. We must so accustom ourselves to the idea of the constant presence of God, that everything we say, or think, or do, becomes a reminder of God. Joseph was in Egypt surrounded by evil influences of all kinds. As a slave, he was the only one of all in the entire household believing in the one true God. There was much to induce him to forget about God. Yet, when he was tempted to sin, his first thought and his first word was: "How can I do this in the presence of my God?" The thought of God preserved him from sin. And how can we attain that, I might say instinctive, feeling of God's presence? The virtue of piety is the means to this. Piety, of which I spoke in a preceding conference, does not consist in simply saying a certain set of prayers at stated times, but rather in the disposition

of mind to relate and refer all things to God. The idea of God's presence should be as inseparably with us as is our shadow.

This constant feeling of the presence of God will be a source of strength in difficulties and temptations; it will be a powerful force keeping us from dangers and occasions of sin, from things, places, and people, which otherwise would prove our undoing.

As a third precaution we are told to avoid the company of evil-minded people. Let your mother know with whom you are going, and with whom you are working, or playing, and what your companions do and say. And if your mother tells you to avoid certain girls, no matter how fond you may be of them, let that advice be your law. Your mother may not find it prudent to explain all things to you at the present time. Nor will it be necessary for her to state her reasons why she advises you to avoid certain girls, certain parties. Time will come when you will see the wisdom of your mother, and you will thank her and congratulate yourselves for having followed the advice of that faithful mother.

XIV. The Meaning of Vocation

My dear Children of Mary: Many girls think that, practically, there is but one vocation for them—marriage and a home. They understand that boys have the choice of many vocations; for themselves they see but one. Now, while it is true that God in His wisdom has called most of you to preside over a home of your own, not all of you are called, nor are all of you even inclined, to make the married state your vocation. Some there will be who will not marry. Can we take it for granted that God has no work for these to do, or that they are failures because they did not get married? To tell the truth, we must say that such girls have not missed their vocation by any means. There are other callings. The married state is only one of them and not the highest or most perfect at that.

There are three distinct callings, or vocations for life, from which a girl may select the one for which she is the best fitted according to the holy will of God. The most perfect state is the vocation to the convent. Those who are not called to that high state may be called to live a pure life in the world outside of marriage, and finally there is the married state.

Up to the present time the question of what to be for life may not have entered the minds of many of you. It is well for you to know that God has even now made His choice and has decreed a certain calling for you. One of three callings is yours, and God fitted you for it. Some of you He has chosen to be faithful wives and mothers, others He has selected to serve Him in the world in single

life, and some He has selected to serve Him in the convent. Your duty it is to learn to know the plans God has in mind for you, and when you realize the holy will of God, to carry it out faithfully.

You must understand that, as God has made you, He has the right to shape your life as He wants it to be, for His glory and for your eternal welfare. Being not only all wise but almighty, He has shaped your life not at random, or in a haphazard way, but very definitely, so there can be no mistake as to the course of life that will be pleasing to Himself and that will enable you to save your soul. For a certain vocation He gave you special talents, special gifts of body and of mind. On the other hand, it remains for you to ask God, like Samuel of old: "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth."

Before you contemplate the matter of vocation I would like to remove a mistaken idea that you may have. Do not decide this matter briefly by saying: "Well, I am not one of the pious kind, and so I have no vocation for the convent. Such like myself are made for the world." To single out piety, or the lack of it, as a mark of vocation would be wrong, because, no matter what your vocation may be, it does not free you from the obligation of piety. St. Paul says, "That is the will of God, your sanctification." People of and in the world must be pious as well as the chosen souls who serve God in the sanctuary of the cloister.

Whatever your vocation may be, remember that piety must be part and parcel of your life.

The word *vocation* means calling. God *calls* us to perform a certain work for which he has fitted us. He has endowed us with the necessary gifts long before we ourselves were thought of; long before the world was even made He had us in mind, knew us and gave to us a certain work for life. Hence vocation does not mean

a calling that we might pick out for ourselves to please our fancy, but adopting the calling that God has selected for us.

Now there may be some among you more farseeing than your years would suggest. The girl inclined to be worldly-minded may paint her future in glowing colors and dream long dreams of a happiness the like of which is even difficult to find in story books. Some may dream of marrying a rich, handsome, dashing young man, having a different automobile for every day in the week, and two for the Sunday, and more money than you could dream of ever spending. You can do yourselves no greater injury than by dreaming such idle dreams. They never come true. This sort of thing is all right in a story book, but life is anything but a sentimental novel.

It is as natural for men and women to seek happiness as it is for the needle of the compass to point north. But we err miserably if we think that true happiness can be found only in an abundance of earthly pleasures, wealth, or honors. They are the most disappointed in life and death who seek happiness in the glitter and tinsel of the world.

True happiness can be found only with and in God. God does want us to be happy, not only for the span of our few years on earth, but forever. But in the search of happiness we must not mistake imaginary happiness for the true happiness. True happiness, then, can be found only when we first seek God. In learning to know His holy will and in carrying it out faithfully we will be given that perfect happiness regarding which the world knows nothing. The girl whom God wants to see in a convent may do what she please, she will never be happy unless she enters the convent. Another, whom God has picked out to remain single and to be an angel of charity to those round about her, will not be happy

in married life. The one whom God wants to be the faithful mother of children will not be happy in any state excepting the married state. As we cannot gather grapes from thistles, nor figs from thorns, we cannot find true happiness anywhere except with and in God.

Now, *you* want to be happy. You *should* be happy. That was the very plan God had in view in creating you. Seek your happiness! It is with God. Carry out the holy will of God in your life; make that vocation your own for which God has called you, and you will be happy, both in life and in death.

The ever Blessed Virgin Mary gives us a most wonderful example in the matter of vocation.

Every Jewish maiden had the one desire of being married and had the fond hope of possibly becoming the mother of the Redeemer who was to come. With such a hope uppermost in her heart, the Jewish maiden considered the single state a disgrace. Some of the Jewish maidens were brought up in the temple school. They remained there for a few years only. As they grew older they returned to their homes, and from that time on both they and their parents thought of a desirable match.

When the Blessed Virgin returned from the temple, how vastly different was she. She did not waste any time in idle dreams. Her mind was made up in the matter of vocation. She decided to remain a pure and chaste virgin. The ambition of other Jewish maidens never entered her pure mind.

Even when the archangel announced to her that she was to be the mother of the Redeemer, she was unwilling to accept that honor if it would interfere with the vow she had made. Only when told that this dignity would not interfere with her vow, did she consent to become the Mother of God.

Behold the ever Blessed Virgin Mary ready to forego rank and honor in order to live up to the calling which she found God had marked out for her. I beseech you to imitate her humility, her steadfastness of purpose, her willing obedience to the voice of God.

Ask her help in making the choice that will help to advance the honor and glory of God as well as the salvation of your souls.

XV. Choosing a Vocation

My Dear Children of Mary:—The question most important in your life, the question that, in all likelihood, will determine your temporal and eternal welfare, is the question of your vocation. Since this is so, it is the question that must be solved before all others. To wait until you are thirty or forty years of age before deciding would be folly. The question of vocation admits of no trifling. If you have reason to think that God has selected you for a life in the convent, a decision must be made within a year or two from now. If any of you have heard of God the word spoken to the Apostles: "Come, follow Me," it would be unwise to delay the call for a day that may never come.

You must not think that the important question of vocation can be decided at your own convenience and pleasure. To answer this great question it will not be enough to consult your likes and dislikes. There is but one consideration to which you must pay attention, and that is the holy Will of God. Vocation is not a matter of deciding in which state of life you might enjoy the most comfort or pleasure. Such personal considerations bear no weight with the holy Will of God. Vocation is a matter of pleasing God first, last, and all the time. Talents, health, strength of character, a good disposition, might fit equally well in any or all of the three vocations you may select. The holy Will of God must be the paramount consideration.

That you may not make a fatal mistake in the choice of vocation, I will give you four rules, by the help of which you will be enabled to make the right choice.

In the first place, you must seek light in prayer. Prayer means

speaking to God. We cannot think of speaking with God without expecting God to speak to us in return. Of what use would you consider writing letters to a friend, if that friend never answered your letters? You would come to the conclusion that this supposed friend cannot think so very much of you after all, else she would reply to the letters you write. In a like manner we should grow discouraged speaking to God, unless He, too, spoke to us. And God really does speak to us in reply to the prayers we address to Him. He speaks to us chiefly through our conscience, and by enlightening our mind in such a way that we see things in a light often very different from what we would see without that light.

The most fitting times in which to speak to God regarding the question of vocation, are the precious minutes after holy Communion. Make good use of these valuable moments, and ask our dear Lord, the lover of souls, to give you His light and help, that you may decide upon the vocation He has selected for you. Another very efficient means for obtaining advice is the making of novenas in honor of St. Aloysius, of St. Anthony, or of any of the saints. Such novenas are always to conclude with the reception of the holy Sacraments. God could never permit that a fervent prayer should remain unanswered.

In the second place, you must consider your own inclination. Often you find children playing little games in which they imitate the vocations of grown people. Some little girls will dress up to resemble nuns, and they act the part of teachers; others will be little mothers, others will assume the part of a favorite trade, and so on.

In these moods and childish plays you may often be able to foresee the life-work of coming years. Ask yourselves, therefore, what has been your favorite play or pastime. Did you like to play school

and be the teacher? Were you everlastingly bothering your mother for ribbons and remnants of silks to trim your old hats and bonnets? Did you take your smaller brothers and sisters into some quiet corner of your home, to make believe that you were their mother and that they had to mind you? These things seem silly to older children, but for you, when you were small, they meant a great deal. You had the choice of playing at whatever you liked. You imagined yourselves as important as grown people, and the choice you made in imitating the work of grown people shows an inclination towards the life-work you are to select now in all earnestness. Hence it is well for you to think awhile and to recall the games of early childhood as giving you a key to the inclination that has been yours from the time your reason began to dawn.

Then, too, you will have to take an honest inventory of your talents, of your strength of body, mind and will, to see for yourselves whether you are fitted for some particular vocation. Girls who are backward in their studies, not for lack of health but for lack of talent, need not think of a religious vocation. In all probability such a calling is not intended for them. There may, however, be exceptions to this rule, and in such cases the parish priest will be able to give advice. Again, girls who are delicate and frail may postpone the consideration of a vocation. But for all the rest of you this question must be faced squarely at the present time.

Thirdly, if you have reason to think that you are called to the religious life, do not fail to make known to the priest to whom you go to confession your reason for considering this choice. Ask him to give you the necessary advice, either in the confessional or out of it, as he may see fit. And if, after considering your reasons, he tells you that you have a vocation for the convent life, regard his voice as the voice of God.

Obey such call willingly and gladly, thanking God that from among thousands and thousands He has selected you to serve Him in a holy manner, that He wants you to be ever near Him, permitting you to live under the roof that shelters Him in the Tabernacle of the convent chapel.

Lastly, you must ask the advice and consent of your parents.

For some unaccountable reason many parents are opposed to their children serving God in the convent or at the altar. Lack of means, dependence of old age, and sentiment are brought out in force to urge the child to change his or her will. Nearly all who wish to embrace the religious state have to overcome this obstacle.

If some of you might wish to enter the convent, and you find your parents unwilling to let you go, you must bear in mind two considerations. First, we must obey God rather than man. Christ said: "If you love father or mother more than Me, you are not worthy of Me." Once we are certain of our vocation we must be ready to overcome all obstacles, to overcome all sentiment, or we will make a dismal failure of our life. In telling your parents of the vocation which you believe is yours, God Himself will give the words into your mouths you are to say. If your parents are unwilling to let you follow the way of God, pray all the more, not only for yourselves that you may persevere, but that you may, with the help of God, bring your parents over to your way of thinking. Ask God to soften their hearts!

Secondly, if your prayers seem without immediate result, all you can do is to resign yourself to the will of your parents until you become of age. After that you are free to do whatever you know to be best.

Some years ago I knew a family who were most unwilling to let their daughter enter the convent. The father left nothing

undone to get his daughter to forget her idea of being a nun. The parents were wealthy and the girl was given dresses in the very height of fashion. When she showed talent for music her father sent her to the best teachers. She had a sweet voice, and her father had her voice cultivated. Her older brothers had to take her to amusements and parties, her home was the meeting place for young people, and the parents encouraged the visits of good young men. All these attractions seemed without influence to change the girl's choice. Finally the father took her to Europe and showed her the large cities of Europe with their beautiful treasures of art. Returning home, the father still saw that his daughter was not happy, and he asked her one day why she was not happy with all he was doing for her. Without hesitation she told him that she could not be happy except in the convent. "Well," he sadly replied, "if nothing can change your determination, you had better go to the convent, but, I assure you, mine is the bigger sacrifice."

This girl is now a zealous sister, teaching in a parish school. Her lessons in music and vocal training, and her travels all over Europe, have been an education that she puts to splendid use in her teaching. You see how the various means to which her father resorted in his efforts to keep her out of the convent were permitted to equip the girl so much the better for the service of God in her vocation as a teacher.

Be not discouraged, therefore, if you meet with obstacles. God's way is the best way.

XVI. The Calling for the Religious Life

My dear Children of Mary: With the view of explaining to you the three chief vocations to any of which you may be called, we will turn our attention first to the holiest of the three, not only for the reason that this vocation deserves our first consideration, but also for the reason that, if any of you are called for the religious state, it will in the order of time show itself earliest of all.

I need hardly tell you that the vocation for the convent is the holiest of your vocations, because a life spent in the convent is spent in serving God directly and most perfectly. While we all are asked to serve God, yet none are asked to follow and to serve God as perfectly and as closely as God wishes those to follow who serve Him in the convent. With people living in the world God is satisfied if they keep the Commandments. But the chosen souls which God selects for a religious life are called upon not only to keep the Commandments, but by following the evangelical counsels to become as perfect as it is possible for human beings to be. "If thou wilt be perfect," Christ said to a youth, "sell all thou hast and give it to the poor; then come and follow me." They serve God most perfectly who give their whole life to the service of God, without reserving the least part of it for themselves. This means the complete surrender of self to God. To renounce all ambition, to renounce all prospects of fortune, to renounce all lawful pleasures, to renounce all consolation that home ties bring with them, to work simply for the food and clothing one needs is indeed a great sacrifice. Nor is this all. The religious must renounce even themselves. They place upon the altar even their will, and from

that time onward until death they consider no other will than the holy will of God as it is indicated to them through the will of their superior. These few principles of the religious life show why this state is the highest and holiest to which any of you may aspire.

Worldly-minded people will grant all this. But at the same time you will hear them say that a girl should have ample time in deciding upon such a great vocation. And this will be admitted by the saints. But people of of the world will tell you that this ample time means to await the period when a girl has no other prospect in this world than to be an old maid. Then, they think, it is time enough to think of entering a convent. For that reason, when a girl of fourteen or sixteen expresses a wish of entering a convent, one hears the cry about children not knowing their own minds.

Again, comments of all kinds are made when an especially bright young girl enters the convent. Regrets are then expressed all around, as though a girl had to be naturally a melancholy dunce to make her fit for the convent. When a girl has the unfortunate disposition of constantly moping around, never satisfied with herself and the things and people around her, she would make a very poor candidate for any convent. She would make life a burden for herself and all those with whom she would come in contact in convent life. Others will be heard saying: What a pity it is to see So-and-So entering the convent. With the money, the education, or the good looks she has, she might have a wonderful career, could marry well, could lead a life of pleasure and of happiness. All of which might easily be true. But who will dare blame God for the choice He makes of favorite souls! What is there to prevent Him from selecting the very best of the young people for His service! Can we suppose that God should be content with taking only those for His service for whom the world has not

much use? Can we suppose that God should take the dullest, the homeliest, the most unfitted? God would indeed be a poor judge if He were to take for the holiest of service only those souls discarded by the world. Still others are heard who feel pity for the young girl who enters the convent in her tender years, because she foregoes her opportunity to get a taste of the world. If God sees fit to call a girl to the convent we may be sure that she will know the will of God long before she reaches the years of a grandmother. God does all things well, and nowhere do we find the workings of Divine Providence more admirable than in working out the vocation for the convent.

Suppose someone had promised you an automobile. You see him or her using this car every day for years. You know all along that this car is yours by promise, and you remind them of the promise made. But the only answer you get is this: "You will have to wait a little longer, for I need the car for my own pleasure. Just as soon as I get through with it, you shall have it." And then, at last, after years and years, the day arrives when you are given the car. It is brought to your door and you are told the car is yours. And when you want to make use of it you find it is worn out, and its best value gone. What would you think of such a present! You would, indeed, have reason to feel injured.

Now put God in your own place, and ask yourselves how He should feel when a girl would intend to make an offering of her life to God only after she will have used that life for her own pleasure. What an offering to give Him our life when there is not much more left of it than a decrepit frame waiting for death to end the misery. And yet that is the present which people of the world think fit for God, and feel they are doing Him a favor!

You see, then, how unreasonable people of the world are in

finding fault with girls who wish to enter the convent in the years when God really wants them to leave the world. God deserves, and he desires, the *best* years of our life, not the remnant of a life spent away from Him.

If, therefore, any of you are called by Almighty God to enter the convent, I would beg of you to follow that voice as soon as you are certain of the calling. Do not permit the world to influence you, or to delay you, in following the voice of God. Do not let years and years go by before you make up your mind to leave all and follow Jesus. There may, of course, be singular circumstances in the lives of some, such as the helplessness of an old father or mother, and the bringing up of smaller brothers and sisters in cases where parents are dead. There may be cases where but for the help of an older sister the smaller children would go astray. If for such reasons a delay seems natural and necessary, follow the advice of your parish priest, or your confessor, who, knowing your case, will be best able to advise you properly. But apart from these exceptions, obey the call of God promptly.

The very fact that God calls you in your tender years is a sign that God wants you here and now. If God were to want you later on, the call would come later and not now. There have been souls called to the convent life after years spent in married life, as we see in the examples of St. Bridget, St. Hedwig, and St. Jeanne de Chantal. God had His own plans for these holy souls. We may be sure that, had He called for them earlier in life they would have renounced all as willingly as they did when the call finally came.

Whenever, therefore, God says to any of you: "Follow Me," go, and, like the Apostles of old, leave all things behind and follow Him.

XVII. Convent Life

My dear Children of Mary:—With all the care that is taken to prevent girls from getting wrong ideas about convent life, there are still girls who think that the convent offers an easy life. Unfortunately, such girls judge only from appearances. They see certain sisters daily, see them look happy, find their habits always neat and trim, and so they come to think that convent life offers an easy way out of all the troubles a girl finds in the world.

Of course, every one will admit that sisters are a pleasing sight in their habits. But if one were to infer that the sister has nothing else to do but pose in that habit one would make a fatal mistake. Sisters will, as a rule, look happy and cheerful. On the surface it will appear that they have more days of sunshine than the people who live in the world. But this peace of mind does not come from a lack of trials and crosses, but from the happiness God gives them to bear His burden gladly. Worldly cares and worries that trouble people of the world, the thirst for honors, promotions, success and increase of wealth, are and should be unknown to souls behind convent walls. Yet all these circumstances do not make convent life an easy life.

If the religious state is the most sacred you may select, you may be sure that it is likewise the hardest of the three from which you may select.

To remove any mistaken ideas you may have heard from various sources, we will now consider the religious life, not as it may appear, but as it really is.

First of all the religious life demands a heroic practice of the three virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity. The virtue of Faith is exercised most heroically by the surrender of will. Take away

your will and you give up your very self. Surrender your will and you are completely at the mercy of him, or her, whose will you follow instead. The vow of obedience means the implicit belief that the voice of your superior in the convent represents to you the voice of God. No matter what your private opinion may be of any command that is given you, it is not intended that you may do anything but obey.

The religious must have no will of his or her own, but implicitly obey the lawful superiors who act in the name of God.

Consider what it must mean to bring such a sacrifice, to deny one's every wish and will, and even, at times, the better judgment, and to simply obey another whose wishes, tastes and likes may be the exact opposite of what one would like. And this surrendering of the will is a constant sacrifice. It is not demanded only once in a month or year, but dozens of times each day. You see, then, that it is not simply a question of looking neat and happy in a habit. It requires more than the mere outside appearance to make the religious truly religious.

The surrender of the will is not the only sacrifice that is demanded of the religious. The virtue of Hope is to be exercised in an heroic manner.

The religious deny themselves not only all property they may have at the time of entering the convent, but the very prospects of ever having anything they might call their own. The book they read, the habit they wear, is given them not as a thing they might call their own, but simply for their use, to be taken from them when the superior sees fit to do so. The religious give up everything that might keep them attached to the world, in order that they may resemble Christ all the better, who had no place to lay His head. Of Himself He said: "The birds have their nests and the foxes have

their holes; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Hence the religious cast themselves completely upon Divine Providence by withdrawing from everything the world holds dear. This sacrifice is made for the purpose of gaining heaven. It is natural for the poorest of the poor to strive for a little something. It may be the saving of a few dollars, it may be the buying of a few acres of ground, just enough to provide a home. What the poorest may acquire in this way seems a trifle to the eyes of the rich; but the poor man clings to that trifle, since it is all he calls his own.

Hence, when the religious make the vow of poverty they deny themselves all earthly things, wealth, position, honors, titles and pleasures earthly things bring with them. This sacrifice, like the vow of obedience, means that it is repeated countless times each day. Nor is this all. The vow of poverty means to renounce not only the things the religious have at the time of entering the religious life, but even the prospects of gain the future might have in store for them. Moreover, it is not enough to follow the letter of this vow. That of itself would not be enough. The spirit of poverty must be constantly active detaching the heart from all those things which the world prizes.

Man feels a natural repugnance to be dependent upon others. It will be natural for him to desire at least so much of earthly goods that he may not be a burden to others. Any one, willing and able to work, will not want to receive charity. Nothing will humble a man more than when he is compelled to accept charity. The religious, by renouncing all things of this world, place themselves at the mercy of the world. They voluntarily become objects of charity for the sake of God.

Now there is still another vow the religious take, and that is the vow of chastity. With this vow they practise the virtue of charity

in a heroic degree. The love of God is made the only love the religious allows himself or herself to entertain.

The human being is so constituted that it seems natural for him to have a craving for another sympathetic being by whose help he may feel happy, and with whom he wishes to share all he has and all he may acquire.

The religious make a heroic sacrifice of this natural craving, denying themselves even the right and claim to worldly happiness, its love, its pleasure and consolation in order that he or she may love God all the more.

From the heroic exercise of these three Divine virtues, as from a common source, all other virtues flow that must clothe the religious like a gown. Such virtues are meekness and humility, modesty, gentleness and simplicity, and the love for the Cross of Christ.

To practise all these virtues would be a task beyond the endurance of unaided nature. Yet those who enter the religious life are human beings like ourselves, beset with many infirmities, burdened with the inclination towards evil and attacked by countless temptations. The one difference between the religious and ourselves consists in this, that we of the world are easily satisfied with a rear seat in the school of holiness, while the religious, in their simplicity of heart, think they are unprofitable servants of God even though they graduate in this school.

Such in short is an outline of the religious life, and from it you may understand that it does not mean simply the habit, or the saying of certain prayers. The world calls this life a dead or useless life. In fact, the religious life is a constant, living death. It means a constant agony and struggle, separating one's self from all one has and all one is and all one craves for, in exchange for a deathless and glorious life in heaven.

XVIII. The Consolation of the Religious Life

My dear Children of Mary:—What I said in the foregoing conference I did not say with the intention of discouraging anyone who has any thought of entering the convent, but simply for the reason that you might not have mistaken ideas about a question as important as this. We have tried to get an idea of convent life, without ignoring or belittling the sacrifices which religious are called upon to make. But while we view the hardships and sacrifices of the religious state, we must not overlook the fact that God in return for these sacrifices and hardships gives a consolation in life and death which remains unknown to people of the world. In order, then, that the crosses of the religious life may not keep back those who have an earnest desire to take them upon themselves, we will to-day consider the wonderful consolations God grants to those who for His sake join the religious life.

Whatever hardships the religious life may impose upon those who follow it, we must not forget that even the world with all its enticements, its pleasures and honors, is not able to give its followers a life free from cares and worries. Whatever career you may take in the world, you will find none that is free from crosses. Trials and sufferings, sorrow and tears, are part and parcel of the world as of the life behind convent walls. If you bear in mind that people find practically no consolation in the life of the world unless they turn toward God, you must see that the religious life, far from being so austere and forbidding as the world would have it appear, offers more consolation and peace of mind than the world can ever offer

its best friends. The world may wonder and say: how is this possible? You will learn the reason of this consolation by considering the three vows which the religious take.

Surrendering the will may mean many humiliations and much self-denial. Yet this sacrifice is repaid with consolation that more than outweighs the sacrifices. And the consolation consists in this: The more perfect the surrender of will, the less the opportunity for sinning. Sin always implies the consent of the will. Now, the religious have the consolation of knowing that in giving up their will in holy obedience, their thoughts and words and deeds are regulated, not by their own will that might go wrong, but by the will of God who deals with them through their lawful superiors.

Hence, the more perfectly the vow of obedience is observed, the less the chance of doing wrong. This fact will make it plain why the vow of obedience is always mentioned first. It is the most important of the three. The other two vows will follow of themselves, if the first vow is kept in letter and spirit. But if the surrender of the will is only partial, the observance of the other two vows will be made more difficult, and the very consolation the surrender of the will ought to bring will be denied.

Being human, it is natural for us to cling to earthly things, even though we try to serve God to the best of our ability. And the stronger the attachment to earthly things in us, our attachment to God will grow that much less. Finally a time may come when we think so much of something earthly, and so little of God, that we will not hesitate to commit a mortal sin in order to cling to what we consider necessary for our happiness. We see this every day. To make a little extra money some people will not stop and think what is forbidden by the Ten Commandments. There are girls renouncing their God and their Church, in order to marry outside of

the Church, because they think that all their happiness depends upon marrying, no matter how.

Religious see the dangers that are in store for us when we grow attached to things of this world. They understand that we cannot serve two masters, and, rather than forget God and to let earthly thinks like honors, pleasures or money put fetters upon the heart, they gladly renounce all earthly things to be sure of one thing—the love of God. So as not to be trapped by any earthly attachment, these saintly souls make up their mind that there is danger in all earthly things, and by their vow of poverty tear themselves away from any claim the world might have upon them. For that reason they deprive themselves not only of the inducement the world holds out to keep souls away from God, but even of comforts of which even the poorest will not want to be deprived. The religious desires that nothing should bind her to this world, that she may belong to God with every fibre of her heart. Enter the room of a religious and you will find that room bare. A plain, hard bed, chair, table and a crucifix is all the furniture one will find in it. Even poor people might not feel content with so little. And so the religious live on, serving God happily, with just enough to keep alive. The God, who paints the flowers of the fields and feeds the birds, has a way of providing for those who renounce all things to serve Him.

Such a denial, you will say, means many hardships and sacrifices. But the consolations again outweigh these by far.

The religious are thus certainly far better able to serve God. The more free from the entanglements of the world, the more will they become attached to God. Their life is that much happier, and so is their death, because they have nothing in this world to entangle them.

On the other hand, look at people of the world. Are they really

happy with what the world can give them? Is it the rule for the rich man to say: "I have enough money, more than I need, and now I am going to feel satisfied and take things easy?" The rich man usually wants to be still richer. Where is the man who, having received great honors, does not thirst for still greater honors? He will strive restlessly to gain higher honors. Where is the pleasure-seeking person who will say: "I feel satisfied with the pleasures I have." In vain will you seek such a person. On the contrary, you will find the seekers after pleasures searching the world for more and different pleasures. Pleasures of the past have lost their zest; they must seek new pleasures to gratify their everlasting craving.

If it were possible, for even one being, to have all the money and honors and pleasures the world could give, even that one being would not be happy. It would suffice to remind him of death to mar all his happiness. The single thought that death will compel him to leave all worldly things is enough to make his happiness vanish. If you desire to find real happiness you will have to look for it not in the world but in the convent.

Remember the countless poor people who never have more than a living from hand to mouth. Still, these poor people make a bid for at least a little slice of earthly happiness, and that is love. The true love of husband and wife and of children, they feel, repays them for all their struggles and sufferings. The light of love in the eye of wife and children will make the man happy, though he is eating a dry crust of bread. God mercifully placed this craving for love in the human heart. Love is the one light in the darkness of affliction that keeps men from becoming the prey of despair.

For this reason the vow of chastity may seem to people of the world harsh and cruel, but many though the sacrifices may be which this vow demands, it is not without its compensation. The love one

might bestow upon another human being the religious bestow upon God only. Love is not complete unless it is returned in kind, and we can certainly trust that God will find a way to recompense those who for love of Him deny themselves the consolations of human love.

The vow of chastity, it is true, brings with it much self-denial. Yet, who will be willing to say that earthly love is without sorrow? The sorrows that follow earthly love, in sickness and death, inflict wounds that in many instances time is unable to heal. But the religious barring herself from earthly love, feels a consolation, which, like the peace of God, surpasses all understanding.

From these considerations you will understand that it is a waste of pity for worldly people to feel sorry for a young man or a girl who determine to enter the convent. Pity might be felt for those whom God does not call to the convent. For whatever pleasures or honors or consolations the world may be able to grant them, the world can never keep from them sorrow and affliction and loss. Shed not your tears for those who follow the call of God, but congratulate them for being saved from much suffering which the world doles out to its followers.

If any of you receive the call to follow God, do not hesitate for a single moment. Thank God that He deems you worthy of following Him, and be convinced that He will grant you consolations of which the world knows nothing, and that in the life to come He will be your reward exceeding great.

XIX. Obstacles that Must be Overcome in Choosing the Religious Life

My Dear Children of Mary:—Anything that is worth while is worth an effort. People of the world will tell you that the making of money, the gaining of honors, the success of great enterprises, demands much effort. Indeed, whatever we acquire without effort is, as a rule, not much appreciated. Money obtained by inheritance or gift is often spent as easily as received. Honors showered upon one are little thought of. Hence we must not be surprised that the highest calling, to which you may be eligible, demands many an earnest effort. The obstacles you will find in your way will be many, and only in zealously overcoming every one of them will you feel that your vocation is really worth the effort it calls for.

They could best tell what struggles and trials must be undergone who have entered religious life; but rarely, except when called upon to give advice to others, will their lips open to reveal the trials, the doubts, the opposition they had to overcome, before they saw their way clear to follow the voice of God.

For the sake of those who seriously contemplate entering the convent, and as a wholesome lesson to all of you, that you may learn to see things in their proper light, we will speak of the ordinary obstacles that must be met and overcome before one can enter upon the religious life.

As a rule, the first obstacle will be the refusal of consent on the part of parents.

Many a misguided mother will be shocked if her daughter desires to be a sister, as though it were a misfortune for the family.

If the girl marries the whole household rejoices. No question is ever asked whether the daughter will be happy in that state. At any rate she marries, and what more can a girl expect! Whether the man is unworthy, whether he is honorable, industrious, sober, is sometimes not even thought of. There are mothers who seem to have but one task in life, and that is to marry off their daughters. Yet happiness and marriage are by no means words that mean the same thing.

Some mother will say, "If my daughter marries, I can see her once in a while, and she can come to visit us; not so if she goes to the convent."

Such a mother gives more thought to her own gratification than to the happiness of her daughter. Indeed there have been mothers who would rather see their girls die than enter the convent. Such parents do not realize that their children belong to God. As He has given them, so, too, He may take them. But the trouble with such mothers is usually their extreme selfishness or, possibly, their anger at not having things their own way.

If some of you have reason to think that you are called to enter the convent, and your parents oppose your wish, pray that God may soften their hearts. Tell your difficulties to your parish priest, or to him to whom you go to Confession, and follow their advice.

Other obstacles will, at times, be found in peculiar conditions, the poverty or impaired health of parents. There may be instances where an only child feels called upon to enter the convent.

Speaking on general lines, a vocation will seldom be found in such cases. We may be certain, however, that if God has really chosen such a soul, He will find a way for her to follow that calling. The ways of God are wonderful.

Many years ago a certain mother lost her husband. One of her

boys had finished a year at college in preparation for the priesthood, and relatives and friends advised her to make the boy leave college and help in bringing up the smaller children. But this good mother said that if it were God's will that the boy should be a priest she would not place the least obstacle in his way. The mother worked all the harder that her boy might finish his studies. In time this boy was ordained a priest, and became Pope Pius X. Had the mother of this great Pope followed the advice of her worldly friends she would have robbed the Church of one of her greatest Popes.

There are other obstacles in comparison to which the opposition of parents seems trifling. And among these difficulties we mention the vanity and love of ease found in many girls of the present time.

Too many girls there are who spend every penny they earn for dress. The girl working in a factory desires to dress as handsomely as one who earns three times as much. Now it is certain that it is quite proper for you to dress nicely, but to dress becomingly must not mean extravagance. People nowadays are hankering for amusement, and girls follow the fad. If they have to miss a dance or a show their hearts almost break. They must take in every excursion, dance and play that comes along. You have heard, more than once, how this silly craving for pleasure has brought a girl to disgrace and ruin, yet girls will go on in the same way, without taking a warning; the moth will seek the flame, unmindful of the many that lie perished at the bottom of the candle.

The craving for amusement and fine dresses is so prevalent in many girls of the present time that they have no ear for the call of God. There is a great need for nuns; you may inquire of any convent, and everywhere you will hear that they could open so many more schools or hospitals if they only had the sisters for

them. The very fact that there is such a great field for work must mean that there are many vocations, for God selects souls to do this work. Hence, the scarcity of nuns must make us think that there are young people who pay no attention to the call of God. Another fact that leads one to suspect cases of rejection of the call of God is the great amount of misery and unhappiness in the world. Much of this will be of our own making if we refuse the work God points out to us. If we act contrary to the will and plan of God it is needless to seek for happiness. We shall be unable to find it away from God.

Still another obstacle you may find in the lack of piety.

You may have observed how most girls at the age of eight or ten want to be sisters. Piety surrounds them daily at the parish school. But it takes only a few years after leaving the parish school for the practice of piety to grow slack. And this gradual lessening of piety is, unfortunately, looked upon as a necessary condition of life. The world looks upon the practice of piety as something belonging only to the convent and the clergy, and to some old, saintly people.

The truth remains that God selects enough souls to carry on His work, but that many of those who are called pay no attention to His call. Lack of piety makes them deaf to the voice of God. The love for finery and pleasure renders them blind, while sometimes obstacles at home defeat their intentions.

In a number of girls as large as yours, God, no doubt, has picked out some to carry on His work. Let it not be said of you that you failed to follow the call of God.

XX. True Happiness

My dear Children of Mary:—Whatever your plans for your life may be, one thought is always uppermost in your minds, and that thought is that you wish to be happy and content to the end.

The happiness to which you aspire will only be found in one direction. To strive for everything that glitters, to fly from flower to flower like the butterfly, will not profit you. At the end you would have to exclaim with Solomon: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." True happiness can only be found by submitting our will to the Holy Will of God, by taking upon ourselves that state of life to which God has called us. In vain will one seek happiness behind convent walls if God intended her to live in the world; equally unhappy is she who remains in the world when God has called her to the convent.

Some years ago, a girl, after full deliberation and having obtained the consent of her parents, decided to enter the convent. There were four or five sisters at home, and hence her mother could easily have spared her. Unfortunately, however, the mother was thoughtless and foolish. The letters she wrote to her daughter in the convent expressed longing and pining for her beloved daughter. She often visited her daughter and the parting was never without tears on part of the mother. Finally the daughter was so disturbed and distracted by the carrying on of the mother that she decided to return home. There was great joy the day she came home with mother. Everybody seemed happy, except the girl. She said: "You may now rejoice, mother, but the time may come when you will be sorry, for you have made me unhappy from this day."

The girl was a good prophet. She soon began to enter with zeal

upon the life which her mother desired for her. She was hardly ever home. She finally married a Protestant, married him before a justice of the peace without the knowledge of her parents, left the Church for good, and is now bringing up children from whom she keeps all knowledge of God. It is hard to find a woman more bitter against all religion than that woman. She certainly is unhappy. Her mother has now a real reason to long for her daughter. Imagine the bitterness of her sorrows when she must acknowledge that all this terrible havoc is of her making.

The mother did the most foolish thing any mother could do. And the daughter was foolish in listening to the unreasonable appeals of her mother. Even upon leaving the convent the girl had the very best intentions. She intended to return some day to the convent. She kept up her pious practices, received Holy Communion nearly every day, was devout in her daily prayers, and tried to live much like those in convents. But her sisters, as well as her parents, told her it was not well to be so pious, and gradually she grew careless in her pious exercises and became as worldly as the rest.

If you would see this world with eyes about twenty years older, you would see misery and unhappiness in places where now you see but bliss. People, as a rule, do not tell their troubles to children of your age. Your parents keep their troubles to themselves, for fear of casting a shadow of gloom over your young lives, because you will have troubles of your own when your time comes. People may reveal their troubles to an intimate friend, but to the outside world they keep up a smiling countenance, although anyone who can read wrinkles may read in them of sleepless nights and secret tears.

While it is true that much misery is of a kind that no one can escape, it is equally true that much of it is of our own making.

Our sorrows would be less if we did not add to those which this life brings. If people would listen to the call of God, if they adopted the calling for which God appointed and fitted them, there would be fewer tears, less suffering, less sorrow.

God desires us to be happy. Knowing His great love it is impossible to think that He could create a human being with no other purpose than to make him or her suffer. Sin, it is true, has brought untold misery into this world. All mankind suffers on account of sin. But that suffering is beneficial, and intended to open our eyes to the unhappiness of sin, to spare us still greater suffering. Remember, too, that God has promised to reward us for whatever suffering we undergo in His Name.

Even in spite of the misery we see round about us we can and should be happy. God so wants it. But the condition upon which our happiness depends, is and will ever be the Holy Will of God.

A Sister, burdened with the worries and cares of a parish school, will go through the grind of teaching day after day, will repeat and repeat without losing patience, will have words of kindness and patience with those who are willing but slow, will struggle with those who are stubborn and wicked, and will try to be at all times fair and just.

Yet this Sister is happy in her work. Of all things she will see the bright side. Cares worry her, it is true, but she looks at the bright side. She sees how those little minds grow in intelligence, sees how her work leads to good results, sees her harvest of good deeds. She realizes that she is carrying out the Holy Will of God, doing the work God wants her to do, *and is happy.*

If this be not her vocation, however, she would only see the dark side of her work, she would be miserable, and every day would add another weight to her growing burden. The reason of her un-

happiness would be that she of her own accord assumed a burden for which God neither called nor fitted her.

And so we might go through every calling in life, and find in every calling some people happy and others unspeakably miserable. The ones see the bright side of things and feel happy and content, the others see but the dark side and wish for the end.

You see, then, everything depends upon conforming ourselves to the Holy Will of God in all things. Only thus can we be happy, no matter what our lot or calling may be.

There are those who feel an inclination to enter the convent. They feel confident that God has called them to this state. But they see objections. It may be that the vow of obedience seems difficult to them, or they cannot think of severing home ties. Whatever such trivial objections may be, let those who feel sure they have been called, realize that the devil is by no means idle in such a case. He knows that he is about to lose influence with such a soul, and will eagerly suggest to this mind obstacles, difficulties, objections, to keep that soul in the world, where the prevailing lukewarmness and carelessness will give him more opportunity of dragging it to hell.

Ask any sister in the convent, any monk in his monastery, any priest, whether the call received from Almighty God was followed without having to overcome obstacles and difficulties, and they could tell of sleepless nights, of fervent prayers, of novenas and Holy Communions, and other good works, offered up to gain strength and courage. Ask them whether they would return to the world, and they will answer that the world has not enough to give in return for what they would surrender. You see, then, that happiness must be fought for. It cannot be picked like an apple from a tree. It must be earned.

Take to heart the lessons of life. If any of you feel called to take up the hidden life of the convent, fall upon your knees and thank God for having selected *you,* and not someone else in your stead. Pray earnestly, as did those who have followed the call before you, that you may overcome all obstacles, that you may see your way clear to follow the voice of God. Be prepared for a fight with the powers of darkness, and in that struggle look often at the second station of the Way of the Cross: Jesus taking the Cross upon His shoulders. Be willing to take *your* cross upon your shoulders for the sake of God and your own sake, as willingly as did Jesus in that second station for the sake of all mankind, and for your sake, and be assured that Jesus will help you carry your cross, and will make your burden light and sweet.

XXI. Home Life

I. Home a School

My Dear Children of Mary:—If, after listening to our preceding conferences you have not felt that you are among those whom God calls to the highest state to which you may aspire, the state of religious life, you are no doubt destined to serve God in the world. You will be called upon to remain in the world either in single life or to marry and bring up a family. For such of you who are destined to remain in the world, home is the place at which under ordinary circumstances God has intended you to remain, until the proper time arrives to decide for the calling that is open to you.

By this I do not mean that you should regard home as a place where you are to be confined like a bird in a cage, just to pass the time until taken out. You are to be at home for certain important purposes, and these will be explained to you in the following conferences.

In this one we will consider home as a school. It may seem strange to you to call home a school. But it is a training school nevertheless. You may go out working in store or factory, or you may do housework. In any case beware of making the fatal mistake, so many make, of looking at home as nothing more than a boarding house where your father and mother become your servants.

Home should be to you the holiest place outside of the church.

To see this fact in its proper light, let us consider the home in its relation to you.

The home is a school. Some of you may think you had all the school you care for when you went through the grades. In a broad sense our whole life is a school. But the home is a school above all. It is one of the most important grades of the life-school which all attend as long as they live. And if we fail to benefit from the home school we have reasons to fear that we will be very poor scholars in learning the many lessons which life is to teach us in later years. The lessons we are to learn from life will then be about as much profit to us as if we had abruptly passed from the fourth to the seventh grade. Very little a child would profit from the lessons of the seventh grade when it lacks the preparation necessary for this grade.

Home is the school wherein you must learn to build up your character. Your parents are your teachers. God Himself has appointed them for you. The lessons you are to learn there for the rest of your life are the virtues you must know how to practice. You must be able to practice obedience and piety, humility and purity, charity and patience, forbearance, prudence, temperance, meekness and mildness, and all the other good traits of character that make of a girl an angel on earth. Besides you must learn good manners. By this I do not mean that you should be fitted out like the lilies of the field who neither spin nor labor, and yet excel Solomon in all his glory. Not any fine but superficial varnish do I mean by a good bringing up, but that good, sound, common sense and judgment that is the result of Christian virtues. Hence it will be seen that one can show a good bringing up and good manners without a display of wealth. Good manners do not require that you should be walking fashion-plates. By your actions as well as by your language people should be able to tell at once that you have been well brought up in a truly Christian home.

Even if, through force of circumstances, you must be away from home for a while, keep your home before you in your mind and never do or say anything that you would not dare say or do at home. Continue to cultivate, even away from home, the virtues which you started to practice at home, and return home as often as circumstances will permit, and remain in touch with home.

Fortunate indeed are they who can stay at home during their tender years if they profit well by the lessons given them.

But, you may say, how can we learn anything at home? A few examples will best explain this.

Your parents may ask you to do some work, the nature of which is not exactly to your liking. You control your dislike and say to yourself: Well, I will do as I am told. That very moment you practice all the virtues of obedience, meekness, self-denial, humility, patience, simplicity and charity. At another time there may be some little misunderstanding. If a vexed feeling should remain for some time, it will stir up ill will, envy, hatred, jealousy, anger and pride. Your conscience tells you you should smoothen out this misunderstanding. Reconciliation is necessary that will mean to forgive and forget, even though you may be the innocent party of the misunderstanding. And again you practice a number of virtues, one linked to the other.

Opportunities for practicing virtues are never lacking. We may profit by them every day. Bearing this in mind, you will easily see why we call home a school. If you are the older child in the family and you have younger brothers and sisters, the idea of school is brought out all the clearer. You are then not the only pupil at home, but, being the older, it is your duty to lead the studies. It is your duty to help the younger pupils of home to learn their lessons of virtue, and one of the best means of helping them in this

study will be the force of your own good example. Indeed, you will make it all the more difficult for your parents and for your younger brothers and sisters if you fail to lead in this home study, the practice of virtue.

We will grant that you may not be able to notice your growth in virtue. That matters little, provided you are a good scholar. It is enough that God knows your efforts and your good will. The fact remains that you are succeeding and that you constantly improve, since what seemed hard and impossible at first seems easier after a while. Hence you may well leave the future to take care of itself, so long as you take care of the present.

It may be that you are not aware of the existence of rough edges in your character. Yet people have such rough edges. If you are unaware of anything of that sort in you, it speaks well for the gentle patience of your parents. In a boarding school your fellow pupils would not show any such forbearance and patience. They would tell you without mercy what *your* rough edges are. You would be incessantly teased for your predominant faults.

Parents will endeavor to gently polish those rough edges, to make you better without you knowing that anything was done to make you appear to better advantage. Thus your feelings are spared, and when the time comes, as come it will, when you appear before the world, the world will find much in you to be praised. Of course you might have those rough edges removed by the world, by strangers; but then the process would cause you much pain and many humiliations.

Hence, if you profit by the lessons given you at home, you fare much better, and you will become all the more competent to take life's burden upon you.

If the religious life is not your vocation, thank God that He has

given you a home where you may learn the lessons so necessary for your future success in life.

Every one knows that homes are not alike. Some girls may have poor homes, in so far as comfort and convenience are concerned. Since parents are human beings, parents will have their faults. Unfortunately in some homes there will not only be poverty, but the poverty is made all the harder by the disgraceful conduct of a drunken father. Children who occasionally see happier homes come to wonder how it is that they must be in a poor and sad home, while other children have a more congenial home. Well, let me say that God knew all this before the world was made, but that nevertheless he appointed one child to this home, another to another home. Since the home is not of our choosing, all we can do is to make the best of it. It will hardly ever be so bad that both, father and mother, are unworthy. Hence do what's right and help a poor mother bear her burden when the father shows himself negligent in his duties. Such a home may be for you a school of sorrow; but even so it will not be without its blessings and consolations if you take to heart the lessons it teaches.

I recall particularly one family where the father was unfortunately a drunkard. There was a number of boys at that home. Yet not one of them has followed in their father's footsteps. They had object lessons right at home to see the wickedness of intemperance, and those lessons were more powerful than if they had studied them in books.

I recall another case of a faithful daughter who provided for such a father after the mother had died. The rest of the children were all married and none of them cared to keep their drunken father. She kept him, went to work every day to earn money for household expenses, came home evenings to do the housework, she

gave up all pleasures of girls of her age, for the sole purpose of keeping her father. She is now happily married, and in her own blessed home she sees the beginning of God's reward for the trouble she took in caring for her father.

Whatever, then, your home may be, thank God for it. Poor though it may be, you will admit it is better than no home. Profit by the lesson it gives you, and in later years when your eyes have opened to the tasks of life, you will thank almighty God that your home, humble though it may have been, has made you fit to bear the burden of life successfully.

XXII. Home Life

II. Home a Shelter

My dear Children of Mary:—Home is not only a training school, that is to fit you for your future tasks, but at the same time it is the proper shelter for you in your tenderest years.

Your parents have fitted out a home as a shelter for themselves as well as for you. Your parents shelter you and endeavor to keep you from all harm of body. If without shelter you were exposed to cold or rain, you would soon be taken sick, and soon your tender body would be the victim of disease and death. Furthermore, your parents lock the house at night to shield you from other dangers. Thieves, burglars and murderers may prowl about at night, and you must be protected against them.

Such are the cares your parents take to protect you from temporal and physical harm. Yet, if parents look out for this only their work is only half done. Since your souls are in the sight of God more valuable than your bodies, your parents must use still greater good judgment and greater care in providing shelter for your souls, and in this light particularly the home is your proper shelter.

You are at no time in greater danger and less capable to avoid danger, never more tempted and less fortified, than at your present age. If left to yourselves in these tender years the outcome of your life would sadden the angels of heaven and gladden the devils in hell.

Those who are weak look for those who are strong, the inexperienced seek the advice of those experienced. It is natural for you, as children, to look up to your parents for the experience you

lack, and for the strength you need. God has planted an instinct of filial love in your heart that prompts you to seek in your parents the strength and experience you need. There may be other people stronger, wiser, richer, or more experienced than your parents. Yet your filial love makes you think that your parents are superior to all others. And so there may be other children more obedient, more loving, more affectionate than you are, yet your parents, on their part, are drawn to you also by an instinct given them by God, and that is the instinct of parental love. That love makes them firmly believe there never were better or nicer children than their own.

See how wisely God has arranged all things, that children might have proper shelter when they need it most. Therefore regard your home as your perfect shelter, where you can be kept from all harm of soul and body if you do conscientiously all that your parents tell you.

Did you ever see a young sparrow on the ground? It cannot fly, for it is neither experienced enough nor even strong enough to sustain its body in the air with the help of its wings. The parent birds did not push the tiny creature out of the nest, the little bird was too venturesome and fell out. Along comes a cat. The little sparrow is helpless. The parent birds see the danger, they flutter in great anxiety from branch to branch, but it is all of no avail. The cat secures the little bird without fail.

Children are like such small birds that are not yet able to fly. Some leave the safety of home all too soon. Along comes the sinful world and the end is disgrace—death. In order that home may be truly a shelter for you, you must, in the first place, trust in the experience of your parents. It may be that you know some French verbs, that you can tell all the stars in the sky by their pet names, that you can recite the names of all the ancient Egyptian kings,

while your father and mother may not be able to add up a column of four figures without making a mistake. Don't think that for this reason you know more than your parents. While they may lack bookish knowledge, they have studied another book, and that is the book of experience. Its lessons have cost them considerably more than your little school learning has cost you, and as your years speed on you will see for yourselves that experience is by far the most costly and the most severe teacher of all.

Profit, therefore, by the experience of your parents. It will spare you much suffering in later years.

Your home should be truly your shelter. For that reason you should have an implicit faith in the ability and experience of your parents. Never ask them "why" you are told to do this or to avoid that. Just rely upon the good judgment of your parents and let that be enough reason for you.

When a little child sees strychnine pills in a box, it may think it is candy and will want to have that box of pills. The little tot will carry on and scream, yet the father will remove that dangerous box and give the little child something else instead. What good would it do to explain to the little child the effects of that poison? The little one would not understand. Perhaps the father is even unable to give a scientific explanation of the action of strychnine upon the human body. But he knows that it is deadly poison, and that is enough for him to know. All the child needs to do is to obey implicitly, for the sake of its own welfare.

We might well apply this little example to the question that comes up in daily life. Father or mother may forbid you the reading of a certain book or paper; they may forbid you to go to certain theaters, to attend certain parties, to go with certain girls. Let such commands be reason enough for you. Do not ask why you should

not do this, or that. As far as you are concerned, your limited knowledge may not enable you to discover the reason why certain books, or papers, or magazines, or certain theatres, or plays, are not good for you. You may not see the reason why you should not go with a certain girl, why you should not attend a certain gathering. Even though your parents would tell you their reasons, you might not understand them. Later years will reveal to you the wisdom of your parents. They might in fact be no more able to give you an explicit explanation than an ordinary man could explain the actions of various poisons. It is enough for the parents to have a general knowledge and to follow their conscience in such matters. All that is there for you to do, in order that home may truly be your shelter, is to obey at once, without asking for reasons.

In our days the duty of obedience is oftentimes seen in a false light. Some persons think it is easy to command and to exact obedience. Much is said of the irksomeness of restraint, and from the small tot upwards all persons desire to be free from *all* restraint. That is their notion of liberty, hence obedience is a thing much hated.

In years to come you will see things in another light. Then you will find that it is by no means a pleasant task to say "no" and to insist on it. You will then learn that nobody knows well how to command unless he has learned well how to obey.

No father or mother will wish to deprive their children of harmless pleasures; no father or mother will demand obedience from you just for the sake of having their way; no father or mother will ask you to do anything that would harm rather than benefit you. In many cases they make sure of their ground by asking others more experienced than themselves, before they will ask you to obey them. Hence it is strictly for your own sake that you should obey your

parents. They can never make home a real shelter for you if you fail to obey them.

Home is meant to be a shelter, but it rests with you whether it will be a shelter for you. If you fail to obey it can not keep you from harm. In that case bear in mind that you hurt nobody but yourself.

Parents spare no efforts to make the home a shelter against all harm. Nothing pleases them more than to see that their advice, their circumspection, their commands, are taken in good part and heeded. That is one of the sweet consolations of parenthood. On the other hand, the greatest sorrow of parenthood is to see children going astray in spite of all efforts of parents.

Remember, however, that whatever the consolation or suffering of parents may be, invariably the children will be the greatest gainers or losers, dependent upon their regard for the shelter of home.

You have all to gain if you consider home your shelter and your parents as your guardians. You have all to lose if you follow your own head rather than the counsels of your parents.

And any mistake you make in this matter now, is too often a mistake that decides your whole life for good or for evil.

XXIII. Duties Toward Home

My Dear Children of Mary:—Every right imposes a corresponding duty. You may claim the right of parental protection and care, and your parents will gladly respond, for this was the duty they took upon themselves when they received the holy Sacrament of Matrimony. Hence we speak of rights of children. But rights bring with them duties. If children have rights, likewise have they duties.

In the foregoing conference we considered one of the duties you owe your home, namely, obedience. You were told of the importance obedience has upon both your training and your safety. Obedience, however, is not your only duty. There is another, and this is helpfulness.

I have never much patience with a child who wants to be paid for everything it does. There are girls who will not even go to the grocery or the meat market without being paid for it. Unless the penny is in sight they will not go a step. No one has much use for such a child. The reason is plain. That child lacks the very first requisite which makes it attractive. And that requisite is *Love.*

A girl who must be bribed for every step she takes in aiding a tired mother lacks love. Think of how this looks in the eyes of a stranger. There is a little girl, her tired mother is busy getting dinner for a weary father who will soon be home from his day's work. A trip to the grocery is necessary. The girl will go, if she gets her penny. What love can such a girl have for her mother when she will not do even so little without being paid for it?

Parents will often reward children with money, candy or other

little presents for ready obedience. But it should never be considered payment for work or favor done.

If your parents at times do give you a few cents as spending money because you have been of some help, do not look upon it as payment, but as a kindness. Tell them you are only too glad to help them in any way you are able, to show your appreciation for the many favors they do you.

Naturally your help will be very little as long as you are little. A trip to a store, small errands here and there, are about all that is expected of you. Later on, as you grow up, you should be willing to help your mother in her housework. Even with your help she will still have plenty of work. You should tell your mother that you will relieve her of all work in your own room. You will take pride in keeping that room neat and clean. If another sister shares the room with you, she will share the work with you. But there should be one room less for your mother to care for. Later you may be called upon to give material support by going to work. You should be only too glad that you are able to help. The motive for your willingness to help your parents should be love and gratitude. Where there is true love there will be willingness to render even sacrifice if parents deem it necessary. A girl who truly loves her parents will constantly think she can not do enough for them.

And then there is gratitude. Just think of all that which parents must go through to bring up a child. How the little baby must be cared for, what anxiety the baby causes in sickness, what trouble these little tots are when they begin to walk, to talk! Remember the sleepless nights your mother spent at your bedside when you were sick, and then ask yourselves whether it is right for the child to step up to parents and demand payment for going an errand!

To show your appreciation of home, your love and gratitude, be at all times ready to help your parents in whatever way you may be useful.

Be solicitous for your mother in every way, and never give the excuse of being tired, or of not knowing how certain work is to be done. You can never be more tired than your mother. If there is any work you do not know how to do, watch your mother do the work, ask her to show you, and then please her by doing the work.

Another duty you owe to your home and your parents is reverence. Your home should be sacred to you. At times you may observe how some children will talk of their parents. Little misunderstandings that may take place at home are carried about by children, others hear of them and spread them, usually much elaborated. Make it a rule never to carry tales. If a brother or sister has received a reprimand from your parents, if misunderstanding has arisen between parents, if any kind of trouble has vexed them and caused them to be impatient, keep it all to yourself! Telling outsiders of private affairs will never help you; it will usually hurt you and your home more than you imagine.

Another duty you owe your home is to be proud of it. You must feel, and act also, as if your home was the very best on earth.

There are other houses more beautiful than yours. Your home may be modest, your parents may be poor, yet you should take pride in your home and use care and forethought to make it look as nice as you can make it.

You can help to keep the floors spotlessly clean. A well kept flower-bed in front of the house, a flower-pot in the window, a neat little vegetable garden—all that will help to make the home look cozy and homelike. The grandest mansion may have a shabby appearance, while a log cabin may be made cheerful and cozy.

Therefore take an interest and pride in your home, spare no reasonable efforts to make it a cheerful home where all are happy.

Another duty you owe to your home consists in doing your own share for the promotion of peace and harmony. There are people who are natural trouble makers. They will find fault with every one and everything excepting with themselves. With such people it is nigh impossible to live. Never become one of them. People living under one roof are bound to have their little differences. But they must live through them. They must forgive and forget, as they wish the rest of the household to forgive and forget their own shortcomings. Charity is demanded of us every day. It is a constant matter of giving and taking. One day you may be in the right and your friend wrong. Forgive and forget! The next time the others will be right and you wrong, and you will want them to forgive and forget. It will often require sacrifices to maintain harmony. You, too, must be willing to offer your share of sacrifices for the common welfare.

The final duty, you owe to your home, is to pray for your parents, for brothers and sisters. With all the money in the world you could never repay your parents for the favors they have bestowed upon you. By prayer only will you be able to partly repay them.

As you live your home-life now, it may seem to you that it will always be the same for the rest of your life.

Such, however, is not the case. Home is but one stage of your journey through life. It may last for a number of years, and then after the death of your parents you will be a wanderer upon earth. It may be the Will of God that in course of time you have a home of your own. Be that as it may, the home of your youth should be a sweet memory to you for life.

Let it be a sweet memory to you, indeed, by now living up to

your duties towards this dear home. How will you feel, if, once your parents have passed from this life, you must admit that you did not help to make their life happy, that you made them sad by your wilful neglect of your duties?

Be your home ever so humble, remember there are thousands of children who would be glad to have a home as good as yours. Think of the poor orphan children, who have no one to call by the sweet name of father and mother. Think of the many really unhappy homes, and you will have abundant reason to thank Almighty God for the home He has given you.

For your own peace of mind be at all times obedient to your parents, and glad and willing to help them in whatever way you can. Never carry tales from home. Take pride in it. Help to make it pleasant and cozy and cheerful. Try at all times to preserve peace and good will among the members of your household, and do not forget to make up by prayers for parents, brothers and sisters what you are unable to return in any other way for all that the home is doing for you.

XXIV. Trust in Home

My Dear Children of Mary:—Having discussed at length the meaning and the blessing of home, as well as the duty you owe to your home, we will conclude this subject with a suggestion of the trust you should place in your home.

If you trace the downfall of a child to its first source you will learn that the child began to go wrong the very moment it lost its faith and confidence in father and mother. The very moment you have a secret that you would not want to tell your mother you are making the first step in the direction of ruin. You are taking the road that will lead to your downfall.

I do not mean innocent secrets. You may wish to surprise your father or mother when the feast days come around. You may wish to surprise your brothers and sisters by giving them a little present for which you save from your spending-money. Such are harmless secrets. Then there are little affairs in school life regarding which you remain silent. If another girl received a reprimand in school, do not make a big thing of it by telling everybody. If it is you that received the reprimand you certainly would not like other children to speak of it in their homes. Therefore always observe the golden rule in such matters and never mention things about others that you would not like to have them mention about yourselves. What I do mean, in regard to secrets, is that you should never have any that you would be *afraid* to tell. Before you do or say anything you would fear your father and mother to know or see, just stop a minute to think it over and leave it undone. Then you will not have a secret that you must be ashamed to tell.

You may know of girls who read a certain kind of papers or books

secretly. These books and papers are carefully hidden and only read when these girls are sure they will not be caught. Why are these books read so secretly? The reply will be: "Well, I don't want mother to find out I am reading this book. I know mother would not let me read it, and I am curious to know what it contains." The very fact that you are trying to hide something from your mother is evidence that your conscience is troubled. You know you are doing wrong. Keeping the wrong hidden will never make it right. Hence make it a rule not to read a book or paper that you would not dare read in presence of your mother. If you girls wish to save yourselves trouble and sorrow, make no secret of what you read. Show your mother or father the paper or book you are reading. If they think the reading matter is unfit for you, lay it aside. There are plenty of good books and papers you may read with a great deal of profit. There is no necessity for you to reach for the forbidden fruit. You will always act wisely in submitting to the judgment of your parents, and that day will come when you will thank your parents for having watched over you so carefully.

There is absolutely no need of your reading the cheap trash that comes under the name of popular fiction. It is printed by the carloads, and no one can expect you to keep up with the flood of novels that is issued these days. Read the *good* books instead, those for which you will not have to feel ashamed. You will find such books in your sodality library; you will find good stories in any Catholic magazine. Read them and you will not have to feel that you are behind the times.

Sometimes you hear of girls who write letters without the knowledge of their parents. The writing of letters is not bad in itself. But it may lead to evil. So make it a rule to have no secrets before

your parents in this regard. Tell them what letters you receive, what they contain, from whom they come, and what you wish to answer. If your parents have a reason to forbid your writing to certain of your friends, simply submit to their judgment and do not ask the reason. You will understand later on and thank them for it.

Again, you may hear of girls who go visiting without telling their parents with whom they go, or where they go. Do not make visits in secret, for they may lead you into danger. You are exposed to more than enough dangers as it is. No need of adding to the dangers you have to face. Never be guilty of such secret and underhand dealings. Let your parents know with whom you go, and the house or place you wish to go to. If your parents object to your going with some person, do not ask the reason, but simply mind your parents. If they do not want you to visit certain families or certain places, some parks or theatres, remember your parents are having your welfare at heart and they have far more experience and wisdom than you.

There are three reasons why you should depend absolutely upon the judgment of your parents.

The first reason is your helplessness and inexperience. You can read books, but your parents can read people. It took you but a few years to learn to read books; the reading of people requires years and years of all kinds of experience. Left to your own resources people who fear neither God nor devil would soon have the best of you. There are persons who would rejoice to see you in disgrace, and all your tears of remorse could never bring back your happiness.

A young apple tree has been raised with great care by your parents. Now it has grown to be a stately tree and your parents feel proud of that tree. Suddenly a flash of lightning strikes that

tree, and there only remains a dead stump. Your parents would indeed recall all the trouble they took with the tree. They would recall how beautiful it looked in its blossoms. Now the tree is no more. One flash of lightning killed all their joy and expectations. All hopes of the future are blasted. Imagine, then, how must the angels of God feel at the sight of a beautiful soul, blasted in the spring time of life. Of course they can not feel sorrow, else their happiness would not be perfect; but they must feel pity, more pity than we could ever feel, because they have a more perfect understanding than we.

The second reason, why you should have the fullest confidence in the judgment of your parents, is their knowledge of the world. Your parents have seen more of the world and of the ways of people than you. Where you may see but a harmless pleasure your parents will see a danger. There are few girls who would want to disgrace themselves knowingly and wilfully. They do not realize their mistake till they have fully entered upon the road that spells ruin, and when they realize their ruin and disgrace they cry out with despair, "Oh, if somebody had warned me!" It is just such despair that your parents wish to save you from. As years pass on you will gradually gain a knowledge of the world, and while at present you may not understand the reasons your parents have in forbidding you certain books, or places of amusement, or certain friends, you will understand later on. You will see with your own eyes how other girls who received no such advice as you did, or who failed to follow such advice, have gone wrong. You will then understand that yours would have been such dreadful fate but for the prudence of your parents. Then you will thank God for having placed implicit confidence in the judgment of your parents.

The third reason, why you should have an unbounded confidence in the judgment and advice of your parents, is that they intend only that which will be to your benefit.

The love of parents for their children knows no bounds. It does not even stop at death, if their death would be the only means of saving their children. Parents are moved by the highest motives of unselfish love for their children. Of all the emotions of which the human heart is capable none is stronger, none more self-sacrificing, than the love of parents for their children. No sorrow is greater than the sorrow of parents over children, and no joy can compare with the joy parents have over good children.

Happy will you girls be if your lives at home will at all times be like an open book. Have no secrets for your parents. Let them know what you think, or do, or say. Let them know where you go, with whom you go. Only by trusting your parents implicitly will you evade the dangers and snares into which you might otherwise step.

XXV. Danger Signals

My Dear Children of Mary:—Wherever one travels one will meet with danger signals. Wise people profit by these signals to keep away from the spots so marked. On land danger signals are placed near unsafe bridges, cave-ins, ditches, excavations for buildings, etc. On water one will find danger signals in shallow waters, where rocks are near the water surface and along dangerous cliffs. Such danger signals are a warning to keep away. If one does suffer one has but one's self to blame. The signal is there and it is visible for every one.

You girls are just about to set out upon the journey of life, and as you proceed you will meet with danger signals. Others have gone the same way. Some have heeded the warnings of the signal and have escaped danger, others disregarded these signals and have suffered.

That you may be saved the sad experiences of such who have failed in life, we will review a number of danger signals that you will find along life's path. Profit by their warning that you may be saved the sorrows and the disgrace that others had to suffer.

The danger signal I want to describe to you to-day is one that is seen quite frequently. Many there are who mind it not. But that does not remove the danger. The danger is there, and they who will not listen to warning will come to harm.

We have in every city, and in little country towns as well, a certain type or class of men,—and they are often married men at that,—men who are anywhere from fifty to seventy years of age, who seem to have but one purpose in life, and that is to ruin girls like

you. Girls like you, young and inexperienced in the ways of the world, become the prey of such rascals. And the pity of it is, it is so very, very easy! A little flattery, a few boxes of candy, some cheap jewelry, a story about an unhappy life at home, a story of how he cannot get along with his wife and that he will get a divorce as soon as possible, to marry a girl as sweet and innocent as you, a ticket for the theater and supper after it, and from there to the downfall is not very far.

Many of you are so situated that you must go to some shop or factory or office, others must go and do housework in other families to help support the home. It is then that you girls must be on the lookout for the danger signal of the flatterer and easy spender. Especially if you are good looking and neat in dress and appearance, you will have such men after you. It may be your foreman who begins to tell you all kinds of tales, who promises you a raise in pay, or a present. He may be a traveling man, who flatters you, wants to give you some present and asks you to meet him at a place away from shop or home. He will say that he has taken a liking to you and will help you get along so you may earn more money. All of this is, of course, nothing but idle talk. When you agree to work in some shop or factory the understanding is that for a certain amount of money you will give a certain amount of work. Nothing more. If the superintendent, foreman, or any other man, comes around to your work bench to whisper some sweet nothing into your ear, do not listen. Here is a danger signal, and a very important one at that.

Right here is where a girl who tells her mother everything that is going on acts wisely. The mother will at once know that her daughter is exposed to great danger, and she will find ways and means to protect her daughter.

A time will come for most of you when it will be perfectly proper to accept the attentions of a good young man. About such company keeping we will speak later on. But at your present age you should not accept attentions from any man. Under no consideration must you accept attentions of married men, no matter what excuses they may make. Accept no presents from men who are strangers to you. Strange men are not in the habit of making presents to girls for the mere joy of giving. They have a purpose in mind that will mean your disgrace if you give them the opportunity. As to accepting gifts, I will say that you should not take them excepting from persons who are known to your parents and of whom your parents approve.

At your present age accept no attentions, no invitations, no presents from any man. Do the work for which you are paid, and if any employer, superintendent or foreman speaks to you about anything outside of your work, inform mother and father at once.

In country places, where everybody knows everybody else, it is customary for all people to bid each other the time of day. Where people are neighbors for life it is proper that they should be on friendly terms with one another. Even the stranger in the village may receive a friendly nod from everybody.

In larger cities girls are not safe in speaking to strangers, nor is it safe to be too friendly with chance acquaintances. If you are in a large city, go about your business, and under no consideration speak to a strange man. If strangers wish to speak to you, continue on your way as though you had not heard them. Indeed, in large cities it will be often as dangerous to have a strange woman talk to you as it would be to have an unknown man talk to you. Always mind your own business and you will not be molested.

There are many girls who invite trouble. One will find them

standing before moving-picture shows, waiting for a stranger to ask them to come in. They are always ready to jump into an automobile, to look for some one to give them a boat ride, and imagine it is great fun. Many a girl will pay dearly for such fun.

Some girls will say: Well, can we have no fun at all? Indeed, you may have all the fun that can properly be had. Your parents will provide amusement for you. Paradise had just one forbidden fruit. All other trees and shrubs also bore beautiful fruit. God does not want us to weep and mourn continually. In His love and mercy He has created many lawful amusements and pleasures, so that we may well get along without the forbidden fruit. Your parents desire to see you enjoy yourselves; they will give you pleasant surprises, will see to it that you have more pleasures even than they will allow themselves. There is, then, no reason for you to play the game of the moth and the flame. Keep away, therefore, from the danger signal of which you have heard to-day, and remember that true happiness and sin never go hand in hand.

XXVI. Danger Signals

My Dear Children of Mary:—In your life's journey you will find another danger signal which cannot be disregarded. It is even more momentous than the one that we have already discussed. It means all the more danger because the danger is met with among those of your own sex.

You will, as a rule, do well to pick your girl friends from among those of your own age and religion. The part that religion plays in friendship will be treated at greater length in another conference. For the present we will confine ourselves to the danger signal of "the older girl."

Everywhere one will find older girls whose one purpose it is to spoil girls of younger age, to teach them the first lessons on the downward path. Such girls will be extremely friendly with you. Seeing they are older than you, you may think their company is of great benefit to you. You may think they will be able to teach you a great deal of the world. Yes, they certainly will teach you; but not the things you ought to know. The danger signal may be hidden from your parents, and they like you may think there is no harm in associations and amusements that are favored by this more experienced girl. But beware, beware!

Some of these "older" girls have cast modesty to the winds long ago. It seems to hurt them to have a pure girl around them, and they will try to make you just as wicked as they are themselves.

Such older girls have grown worldly wise. If they can teach nastiness to a younger girl they think they are doing something smart. Things that should never be mentioned by girls, or by any human being for that matter, are spoken off by these older girls as something very funny indeed. Things which modesty would forbid to

ever mention in company may be often the general topic of conversation. Such older girls will instruct their younger girl friends how to attract men, how to keep a half dozen of them on a string, how to dismiss them if they grow tiresome or are not the spenders they were thought to be, how to keep certain company and certain doings from the knowledge of parents, and how the forbidden fruit is not half as dangerous as strict parents say. Older girls will tell younger girls of the good times they have with their male friends. What money they spend, and so on; and the younger girl soon feels a curiosity to know more. It will not take long before the younger girl will want to experience the same good times and, since she is being instructed so thoroughly in all details, she thinks she will succeed equally well in keeping this newly learned fun from the knowledge of her parents. She has learned the first lessons in vice and is eager to see how it feels to be as reckless as her older girl friend. This sort of girl you will have to avoid as you would fly from small-pox or any other fatal disease.

Girls stepping out from their homes into the outside world are often puzzled. They begin to ask themselves which is the real and desirable world after all. Is it home with its set rules of conduct, its set times for prayer, for work and play, or is it the outside world where no rules and restrictions of any kind are respected? Soon home and its shelter from harm are looked upon as unnecessary restraint; vice has set out its tempting bait, and the girl from home begins to thing that after all the world without restraint is a good place to live in. An older girl has initiated her into the new life and she begins to feel that all joys and pleasures are hers if she but follows the advice she has received. Her very first effort is a grand success; she has found a young man who takes her to all amusements. From then on she travels on the downward grade, and in

her turn she will find other younger girls whom she instructs in vice and shame. A stone thrown into a calm pond will cause ripple after ripple on the water in seemingly endless succession. One girl teaching a younger girl the way of vice will bring on sin after sin, ending only God knows where and when.

For many girls it is the misfortune of their life that they have to go away from the home, into shop or factory, to add their share to the support of the household. For the great majority of girls it would be far better to stay under the parental roof until they marry. Then girls would be far better fitted for their real life work, the making of a new home, if they learned all about keeping house, cooking, sewing, and so on. We cannot change conditions, but what we can do to improve them should be done. With new conditions there come new dangers. These must be met squarely. If we find ways and means of avoiding the dangers, the conditions themselves will not have to be dreaded.

The danger signal to which I am referring is met with by girls who work away from home. There is no disgrace in work. But you will meet in shops and factories the "older girls," who will strive to lead you astray. For that reason set up the rule for yourselves never to listen to the stories of these girls. Do your work and do not make such girls your friends. Accept no presents from them, no matter how they may press you to take them. A present always means that something is expected in return. Never go out with such girls. If they wish to take you to a dance, to a park, to the theater, tell them that you do not go out except with your parents. Such girls will try to destroy your implicit confidence in your parents; they will try to undermine parental authority; will tell you that as you now earn money you may do as you please, they will tell you that you might as well be your own master now

as afterwards. Let such talk go unheeded. Above all, remember that you must tell your parents of such talk the very first time you hear it. Tell them who used it and be loyal to your parents as you know they are loyal to you. Reason it out for yourselves. Why should a strange person, one who never knew you before, one who never cared for you, have more to say over you than your parents? Why should you listen more to a stranger than to those who have always been dear and near to you! If you tell your mother about the topics that are being mentioned to you by older girls she will find a remedy. A change of work is often advisable. But then at another place you might find the same dangers. So it simply comes to this, that, wherever you are you must be on your guard; ask your mother for advice and bear in mind that your mother's advice will be your safest guide.

Remember you are not stepping into a fairyland when you leave the parental roof. Home was your fairyland. The world away from it is not what it may seem or pretend to be. Where laughter turns to tears so easily, where there is nothing but work and hard work for a few dollars, and sorrows outnumber joys, there we cannot find the happiness that is felt in the smile and embrace of a mother. The world may laugh to tempt you, and make you believe that all is sunshine. Do not take the tinsel and glitter of the world for solid gold. The inmates of an insane asylum laugh, too; but that does not mean they are happy. The world is not insane, but, as the tool of the devil, it seeks to deceive people and it succeeds admirably. Therefore never turn your back on your home. Do not lock the very door you might badly want to find open some future day. Many a girl has left her home with the curse of a father or mother ringing in her ears. She meets with ruin and disgrace. The world casts her aside as one throws aside an empty shell. When all

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

other doors are closed to her she longs to go back home, if home she can go.

Do not heap such misery upon yourselves, but keep out of reach of the danger signal that I explained to you to-day. Keep away from older girls who endeavor to destroy every trace of modesty in you. Do not accept their gifts or invitations. Do not ask their opinions about anything.

It seems to be the tendency of the times that girls seek certain information about their sex and health from sources outside of home. I want to impress upon you that there are certain subjects about yourself which you must never mention except to your mother. These matters should be so private and sacred as not to be even whispered to anyone else. Neither ask for, nor accept, any instruction in such sacred matters that concern your health and cleanliness, excepting from her.

It is only just to say that there are *some* old girls from whom you might learn very much indeed. There are noble characters among them as well as mischief-makers. If you have the friendship of a good and sensible girl, older than you, one who will at times warn you or even scold you, one who will give you the same advice that your mother would give, be glad of it and count her as a true friend You may well profit by her example as well as by her advice. The company of such a girl will help you to keep away from wicked girls.

You should, of course, have true friends among the girls of your own age, but select only such as your friends whom you will not be ashamed of asking to your home. If these girls are in their homes just what you should be in your own home, the very sunshine and life and joy, the hope and consolation of parents, you will profit by their friendship, and you will help one another to find true happiness in this life as well as in the life beyond.

XXVII. Danger Signals

My dear Children of Mary:—When we spoke about selecting your girl friends, you were advised to select them from among those of your own age. And there you will meet with another danger, and that is the company of girls of your own age who, under an apparently innocent manner, hide a knowledge of wicked things that none could suspect.

The advice of your mother should always be your guide in selecting the friends of your girlhood years. Never make the fatal mistake of becoming chummy with a girl whom your mother does not want to see with you. If your mother tells you not to go with a certain girl, though she be ever so stylish and jolly, keep away from her. Your mother knows best.

It will be out of the question for you to make all girls of your age your friends. You will have many acquaintances, but only a chosen few, you will find, can be depended upon to be friends and even fewer will remain true friends for life.

Christian charity obliges us to think and speak well of all people, regardless of what faith, color or nationality they are. Christian charity obliges us also to do good to all people whenever there is occasion and we can be reasonably expected to respond. We must not ask whether the party is worthy or deserving, of our faith or of no faith, whether we will be thanked for our efforts or whether we may receive even insults for our good work. So far as acts of kindness, sympathy, charitable works, are concerned we must make no distinction between Catholic, Jew, Protestant or heathen. All are children of the same heavenly Father and as He is goodness

and kindness to all, the righteous as well as the wicked, the just as well as the unjust, we are not allowed to draw a line at which our charity should begin or end. However, to be charitable and kind toward all people does not mean that we should associate with all in friendship. The fact that you have a kindly feeling toward all the girls you know, does not mean that all may be called your friends. The bond of friendship differs from the commandment of charity.

It is natural for young girls to be overflowing with affection. It flows freely from a true and unspoiled heart, which fondly imagines that all people alike are true and well-meaning. As yet you are ignorant of treachery, of deceit, of false friendships and of wicked people. But if you are not wise in the selection of your friends, you may all too soon meet with such things and persons.

In the first place, there are girls of your own age whose friendship would be as fatal as the friendship of those wicked older girls of whom we spoke before. Make no girl your friend of whom you know that she disregards the fourth Commandment or the sixth. Keep away from the girl who neglects holy Mass on Sundays and on holidays of obligation. If a girl gets to be careless about the duties she owes to God you cannot expect her to live up to the duties of friendship. Never begin to be on friendly terms with any girl except with the consent and approval of your mother. It may seem strange to you that your mother should have so much to say even in this matter. But there is a reason. It takes good parents to have good children. The girl you have in mind may be all right so far as you know. Your mother, however, may know something of the family of this girl. So you will always profit by the advice of your mother. If your mother advises you not to become too intimate with a certain girl, follow her advice. Treat

that girl kindly, think well of her, speak well of her, pray for her, but let that be as far as you can go.

Under your conditions of life you must of necessity come in contact with all kinds of girls, with girls who are exemplary Catholic girls, with girls who are inclined to be careless and indifferent as to religion, with girls who are Protestant, and girls who go to no church of any kind. Unless Divine Providence wants to make use of you to bring such souls back to the true fold, the true Church, you will act wisely if you do not become too intimate with any but those whose example will be an encouragement to you to be faithful to your duties towards God and your parents. As to girls who profess a different faith than you, or no faith at all, there is a good rule for you to follow, and that is this: if such girls listen to you in sincerity when you speak to them of God, when they ask you about your religion, prayers and so on, then God may want to make use of you to bring such souls back to Him. There are many such girls for whom a good Catholic girl friend is a great blessing. Many girls are the children of parents who have been faithless to God. Perhaps for the sake of money or marriage they fell away from the Church, and God wants the children back even though the parents will not want to came back. God may make use of you to do a good work, to help Christ in His work of saving souls. If such are your opportunities, thank God for considering you worthy to help Him in His own work. You may be the means of saving a precious soul. Such girls you must encourage by your own good example, and by your kindly ways of explaining the truths of our holy religion. Bring them to holy Mass. Our dear Lord will have a way of His own to speak to them from His Tabernacle. Bring them and He will do the rest. Give them good Catholic books and papers to read, and you will be a little missionary. Offer up holy

Communions for such girls, pray for them, and you will do a good work for which our dear Lord will shower upon you His choicest blessings.

But when girls of other or of no faith are inclined to make fun of your religion that is another story. It will then be the best policy for you to stay away from such girls. Pray for them, of course, but as to making such girls your friends that is altogether out of the question.

You may have a girl friend who is not a Catholic. She lets you go your way and she goes her way; she never speaks of religion and she tries to lead a good and honest life. What are you to do in such a case? Simply follow the advice of your mother. Your mother will be able to judge whether that girl is well-meaning and whether there is any danger in being intimate with her. Whatever your mother says let that be your law.

A girl friend who is a devout and earnest Catholic will by her example be of immense benefit to you. Her going to holy Mass, her frequent reception of the Sacraments, her pious works should inspire you to do likewise. All of us need the strength that good example gives. There are times when we may feel like giving up the good fight, and then the prayers and the good examples of friends support us in our trials. How lonesome the girl must feel who depends entirely upon the friendship of one who is of another or of no faith! She is in great danger of growing lukewarm and careless in her religion.

Try to be worthy of the friendship of Catholic girls who can be of real help to you in the most important business of your life; the saving of your immortal soul.

There is another element of great danger in entering friendships with girls of another or of no faith. These girls may have brothers

or male friends of about your age. By associating with such girls it will be natural for you to become acquainted with those non-Catholic young men and the danger is that such acquaintances may in the long run pave the way to a mixed marriage. And mixed marriages with few exceptions lead to the loss of faith.

From all this you must see how important it is that you make no mistake in the choice of your girl friends.

A prudent girl will never take a single step in the choice of a companion or girl friend without first consulting her mother. A good daughter will not only ask the advice of her mother but will follow it out to the letter. No matter how well she may think of a certain girl: if her mother says this girl is *not* the girl to go with let that be the end of it.

If girls would place more confidence in the judgment of their mothers; if they would be more obedient in such important matters; how much sorrow they would save themselves, how much scandal they would avoid! Observe the fourth Commandment to the letter, and you will be protected against many false steps, which other, less obedient girls may have to regret all through their lives.

XXVIII. Danger Signals

My dear Children of Mary:—The world to-day is fairly wild for amusements of all sorts. Go along our city streets any evening and see the crowds going into and pouring out of theaters. Twenty years ago one would find few theaters in a city. Now theaters are almost as plentiful as groceries. Again, go out into the amusement parks with all their little shows and see the crowds there. Go along the river banks and you see crowds on excursion steamers. Banners fly, bands play, there seems to be no end of frolicking. It seems as though all the world were on a perpetual holiday. The papers advertise excursions near and far, travels to the north in the summer and to the south in the winter; the trains are filled with tourists every season of the year! The maxim of the present-day world seems to be: "Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we may die."

Of course it is true that all work and no play makes of Jack a dull boy. It is also true that the cat that plays forever will never catch any mice. No one can object to a reasonable amount of recreation and amusement. There, as with many other good things of this world, the harm lies not in the use but in the abuse.

Hence we have here another danger signal, which we will discuss to-day.

In order that the craze for amusement may not confuse your common sense and make you forget your duties, I will give you the following rules, obedience to which will keep you out of much danger and may save you from a wasted and useless life.

In the first place never go with a strange man or woman to any place of amusement.

Let me tell you a story. Two country girls went to the city to take places for housework. They were given the Sunday evenings for themselves. For a while both went to church in the evening. Soon one of the girls, however, told her friend that if she went to Mass she did all that was required and she did not see why she should not have some fun Sunday evenings. So she did no longer attend Vespers, and the next Sunday evening she took a walk through the streets. Soon a young fellow approached her and asked her whether she would not go with him to take in a show. Of course, she did. That was what she wanted. This girl then called upon the other girl to tell of the good time she had had and to ask her to come along the following Sunday. The other girl, however, thanked her for her trouble, told her not to mind finding a man for her, that she would try to find one herself when the time came, and that meanwhile she would attend church just as she did at home. So the two girls drifted apart. The giddy girl with her young man took in shows, went to dances and picnics and thought she had a great time. To make the story short, her parents found it out when it was too late. To save their daughter from disgrace there was a hasty marriage. The fun was over and then came misery. The husband had no idea of staying with his young wife. One day he disappeared, and now she must work hard to support herself and the child. Her life is ruined.

Now ask yourselves isn't this too great a price to pay for a few jolly hours? They ended in shame and disgrace and misery for her. They ruined her whole life. If such tragedy were to happen to only one girl, it would be bad enough. But the same thing happens in thousands and thousands of cases. The other girl had no such jolly time, but yet she was by no means unhappy. She joined the sodality of her church, and soon learned to know some good girls

in the sodality. Among them she sought her friends. She went calling upon these girls, attended their little parties, and in this way became acquainted with a good Catholic man. She married him, and now she is the mother of a happy little family.

Which of these two girls would you wish to imitate? the girl who foolishly ran after men to have a good time, or the other girl who acted sensibly? Which was better off in the end? Therefore I say again, never accept the invitation of a stranger. Make it a rule never even to speak to anyone unless you have had a proper introduction to him or her. If a strange man or woman wishes to take you to any place of amusement, tell them that you are not the kind they are looking for. Then go about your business.

But it is nearly always the girl who induces the invitation. If you give strangers no encouragement they are not likely to approach you.

This brings us to the second rule I wish to lay down. Do not flirt! Who are the girls that fall an easy prey to men? Not the girls who go about their own business, but the girls who flirt with any man who comes along. And who are the girls that get into troubles? Not the girls who go about their own business, but the girls who are out for a good time, and who by flirting invite the attentions of men.

Thirdly, you must never go to a place of amusement without some reliable person going along with you. And who should go along with you? Let your parents make the selection for you. At your present age, and until you are of age, you do not need a male friend at all. Let your older brother or sister be your escort, or any girl of whom your mother approves. A girl of your age is safest in the company of parents. Their company will gain her the esteem of respectable young men.

Lastly, you must never go to an entertainment or place of amusement without the knowledge and consent of your parents.

If in their opinion a certain place of amusement, a certain play or theater, is not a proper place for you, stay away! Your parents know best. Do not ask questions, but obey implicitly. In later years you will understand and thank your parents for having been so wise and thoughtful.

Do not think for a moment that you *must* take in every picnic, and social, and dance, and excursion, that you see advertised in the papers. If you lived to be a hundred years old you could not take in all that are advertised. The entertainments that you or your parents cannot afford, are not for you, and you can easily do without them.

Even under the restrictions I have mentioned you will be able to enjoy as many entertainments as will be for your good. You will be able to enjoy them the more because by following the rules that I have laid down for your help and guidance, you will run no danger, you will need not fear of going to excess, will need not fear evil consequences. Pleasures that end in sorrow and disgrace are not worth the terrible price that girls are made to pay for them.

XXIX. Danger Signals

My Dear Children of Mary:—You will wonder how many more danger signals there are. But there is one to which I must to-day call your special attention. This danger signal applies to dress.

The subject was dealt with before in speaking of simplicity. This time we will consider it from the viewpoint of extravagance and immodesty.

In the first place I would say that it is neither prudent nor common sense that you should spend all your earnings for dress. The saying is: "Fine feathers make fine birds." But it would be foolish for a crow to pose in the feathers of a peacock. No one would be deceived for any length of time. We may say the same thing about clothes. Clothes may deceive some people some time, but not all the people all the time. Still the number of girls who dress beyond their station is great. Thousands of girls like you have to help support the home by doing housework or going to shop or factory. Your fathers would far rather see their daughters stay at home and help their mothers than to see them mingle with the world in the struggle for the daily bread. Yet, even in your tender years many have to face the world, and all they can do is to be on your guard. All about you see girls of your own age, none richer than you are, but they are dressed so that even king Solomon in all his glory could not outshine them in his royal splendor. All about you you hear that unless you dress up and be somebody you have no chance. No chance of what? No chance of attracting men. There we have the reason.

We will take for granted that a girl goes out to work. Her object is to help in the support of the home. In some cases a girl will give all her earnings to her mother, and she will be given part of her earnings for car fare, lunches, and spending money. Many girls will not listen to such an arrangement and will simply give a certain amount for their board. It is then that the true idea of home fades out of sight. Home becomes nothing but a boarding house, mother becomes the servant of her own daughter, father has nothing to say, for if he does, the girl may tell him she will look for some other boarding house. With the rest of the money these girls do as they please. They see other girls dressed like the daughters of some millionaire. Their father may in all probability work in the very same factory, for the very same small wages for which the other girl's father works. But of course the girls must be dressed in the height of fashion. It seems they have nothing more important to do but read the latest books of fashion, and to dress accordingly. And they do.

Is such a girl really a help to her home? No, she does more harm than good. In her effort to dress just a little better than the other girl that is putting on so many airs, she deprives her home of the means needed to keep it up. Actually she takes more than she gives. No business can thrive when the income is less than the expenses. So the rest of the family must work that much harder that this girl may satisfy her whim of following extravagant styles. Nor is this all. What will be the effect of the extravagant girl upon her sisters and brothers? Very likely the bad example will cause them to become dissatisfied, there will be quarrelling and fault-finding. Another sister may be carried away with the notion of overdressing and that will make the family worse off than before. At any rate this will hardly be a happy family.

A girl will do no end of mischief if she dresses above her means. And will she be happy herself? How can she? Every little while she sees a girl friend dressing just a trifle better than she. So she must buy another hat, another dress, another coat, more cheap jewelry, to outshine the other, and so on, and so on.

But too often worse is to follow. A girl who follows the craze of style will soon find that she can not dress the way she wishes to with the money she gets. And then she sees the advertisements of houses who sell anything and everything on the instalment plan. There is a way out of her difficulty. There she can buy clothing and jewelry at so much per week. The amount is ridiculously small, a dollar a week! Why could she not have a diamond ring? Everybody who is anybody has a diamond ring. Why should she not have a ring! Some girl friend has put on too many airs, and she is going to show this girl. So the girl goes to one of these stores where one can buy anything on the instalment plan. She buys a diamond ring. The paying of only a dollar a week for so many weeks seems like nothing. She will have a ring that will cost her practically nothing, since she will not miss the dollar at all. The ring is bought. She is told that she has made an excellent bargain, because a diamond ring never grows less in value. But she does not figure the risk. She does not know whether she will have a pay-day every Saturday. She does not know whether she will always remain well enough to earn money. In the meantime, going to this store every week she will see other things to buy at only a dollar a week, and she will be tempted to buy.

Should she now lose her position, or become sick and unable to work, it is then up to the parents to make the payments for her or else to lose all the money she has paid out so far and give up the things she has bought. And should she ever try to sell these

rings she will find to her sorrow that she paid more than double what they are worth.

This is not the only bad feature about the craze for style.

When girls of your age spend every penny for finery, they hurt themselves in more than one way. You are now in what might be called the formative period of your life. The habits you form now will be yours for life. If you permit yourselves to become extravagant now, where will it end? What an effect will it have upon your future life? That is the question you should ask yourselves. When a girl is extravagant, what common-sense young man will want to give her charge of his pay envelope? A good and common-sense young man will not care to marry a doll. She may find a young man who is just about as foolish as she is; but if both spend more than they earn, what can they expect?

It is not that the Church desires to describe the styles you ought to follow. The Church has but two rules that you should observe in the things you are to wear. One of them is modesty, the other is health. Outside of that you are to be guided by common sense and the size of your pocket-book.

Take the advice of your mothers in regard to dress. If they tell you that high heels will hurt you, you may be sure they know what they are talking about. If they warn you about tight lacing, do as they tell you and you will save many a doctor bill in later years. There are quite a few girls buried in every cemetery who would have lived longer if they had followed the good, common-sense advice of their mothers.

My final remark concerns immodesty in dress and appearance. Whatever you may wear, try never to shock modesty by your dress. No one will expect or want you to be in rags. Dress decently and becomingly. But dress in such a way that people may not mistake

you for girls who live on streets of bad repute. Our mothers would never have dressed as some girls dress to-day. They would have considered it indecent. That is exactly what much of our present day styles must be called. And decent girls and women wear them and make themselves the laughing stock of all decent men.

If girls only knew how they are being looked at, how they are being laughed at, for going along the streets in scanty dress, I doubt if one could find a single decent and respectable girl or woman dressing as they now do. True, they are noticed, they are being talked about; but not in the way they would or should care for. There is no getting out of it, if you desire to be taken for a good, respectable girl, you must not wear disrespectable clothes, even should they be the height of style. Your reputation should be dearer to you than all the styles of the world.

XXX. The Dangerous Age.

My dear Children of Mary:—When girls reach the age of sixteen and, in many cases, even before, they imagine they have grown so unusually wise and learned that neither parents nor teachers can tell them anything they do not know better.

And yet, at the age of sixteen, girls will hardly realize the nature and kind of life work which Almighty God has ordained for them; they may know a little of a half dozen or so "ologies," but they are unable to tell when water is boiling, nor can they mend a stocking. Yet they will begin to flirt with boys, and they want to be taken to shows and "movies," for one is not up to date unless one has seen the latest pictures and heard the latest songs. And these same worldlywise girls are hardly in their long skirts.

The warnings of an anxious mother might as well be omitted for all the good they will accomplish. What right has a mother to dictate to a daughter, who is finishing the tenth grade, and who knows any and all things when the poor ignorant mother could not even pass an examination in chemistry? But a time will come when these oversmart girls will pay the penalty.

Do not make the fatal mistake of saying that you see other girls acting in this manner. What others do or may not do can never be your rule of action. The commandments of God should be *your* rule of conduct.

We will take it for granted that you have decided the question of your vocation. You realize that you have not been called to serve God in the convent. You anticipate that your duties will be bound

up in home life. Whether the means of your parents may be such that you may acquire a thorough education, or whether you may be compelled to go to work to help your father in the support of the family, the fact that you are staying in the world does not imply the right that with the sixteenth year you should begin company keeping. There will be plenty of time for that when you once realize that marriage is your vocation, when you know more of the duties and obligations of that life, and when you are competent to do all the work which your mother does now.

No one wishes to deprive you of your rightful share of fun and pleasure. Almighty God has in His kindness destined compensations and pleasures for each time of life. There is no need of your anticipating pleasures destined for a future day. Enjoy all lawful joys intended for you at the present time in your home circle with parents, brothers and sisters and such girl friends of whom your parents approve. In years to come, when you will have learnt the lesson we all must learn—that life is not all play—you will look back to these joys of home life with a longing akin to that of our first parents whose thoughts often went back to the lost paradise. Hence, with hearts that are still carefree and innocent, enjoy to the utmost the blessings and happiness of home life. There is no need of you craving for things that are neither intended nor good for you.

Why is it that at your present age you are warned about the dangers of company keeping? Because, as yet, you are not prepared to settle such an important question of vocation, upon the proper solution of which your whole temporal and eternal welfare will depend. When a grayhaired woman dresses like a girl of twenty, when a whitehaired old man tries to make love to a girl that might be his granddaughter, people grin and say: "There is no fool like an old fool." But when a girl still of school age accepts the attentions of

a boy still in his teens, people of the world shake their heads gravely and fear the outcome. The world pities such children if they are without parental guidance, and it severely censures them if they ignore such guidance.

At your time of life you lack the judgment and experience to decide in such a momentous question as courtship and marriage. As yet you have no idea of the burden and responsibility that married life imposes. If married life meant nothing more than a constant holiday and love-feast, we might marry you all off the day you leave school. But married life means a great deal more than that. Married life means countless sacrifices and hardships, the meaning of which is still unknown to you. It means difficulties and trials of which you know absolutely nothing. It means tears and suffering you cannot now even understand.

On part of the young man married life requires that he be of good character, that he be honorable and an honest, Catholic, young man, that he be able and competent to support a family with the work of his hands. On the part of a young woman the vocation to the married state requires that she be able to do all the housework, cooking, baking, washing, ironing, sweeping, dusting, mending, sewing and scrubbing, so that she may in truth be a "help" mate to her husband. Married couples must live together, work together, save together. Unless they are competent and willing to work, their married life will be anything but a happy life.

It stands to reason that a boy of sixteen or seventeen is hardly able to support even himself by his work. How can he think of supporting a wife and children, if he is unable to provide even for himself? Why should a boy, then, want to court a girl when he cannot take care of himself! Why should any girl accept the attentions of such a boy!

Thus you see how utterly wrong it is to begin company keeping at so early an age.

Some there may be who say that, while they do not believe in early marriages, they see no reason why a girl should not begin keeping company any time a young man may think it proper to call upon her. Should not a girl have the right to fully know a young man before making him the man of her choice? We will grant all that. But even such a view will not permit of childish love affairs There will be plenty of time to learn all about the young man who is to be your choice. In the first place it will never require from eight to ten years to learn to know a young man. Even after a girl has reached the years when she is to make her choice, an unduly long courtship will often be more of a drawback than a benefit. For later years you might put it down as a rule that when you cannot know all about a young man that you should know in the time of one year, you will never know or understand him. In the second place, the right young man, the one whom God has picked out for you, may become tired of you.

For your own peace of mind and heart do not be in too great a hurry to shorten your girlhood days. These happy days will never return to you. The twenties with their troubles and cares will come soon enough. When you enter upon the twenties, and you realize that you must decide the most important question of your life, it will be an honor for you, and a consolation as well, to look back upon the years of from sixteen to twenty with a clear conscience. Then there will be nothing in those years that you may want to keep hidden from him whom you will truly love. You will not have contracted any giddy, foolish or extravagant habits. You will be able to open the book of your whole life and no one can point to a single incident that could in the least tarnish your purity of mind and heart.

XXXI. The Sentimental Age

My dear Children of Mary:—At times one sees girls of your age who by their way of dressing and general actions seem anxious to create the impression that they are at least three to five years older than they really are. Not that they appear sensible beyond their years. These girls, though hardly out of school, desire to appear old enough to attract young men.

Usually such silly girls have crammed their little heads with mushy love stories. Such novels and stories are unfortunately believed to be real life, and the foolish girls, not having a bit of room in their heads left for good, sound, common sense, take it for granted that things have to be as they have been written in these stories. Hence they dream dreams, day and night, about some grand hero who answers all the delicious specifications: wavy, blond hair, blue eyes, noble stature, giant strength, and so on. But this hero does not make his appearance. One does not find them any too often even on the stage, where with paints and powder and wigs and fantastic clothes, much indeed can be done to bring a story-book hero to life. And since even the stage produces such a hero only rarely, it is little wonder they appear so seldom in *real* life.

The hero in real life may not have wavy hair, blue eyes, charming voice, may not own castles or even an automobile; yet he will do very well in an emergency. Provided the young man is a smooth talker and a clever flatterer, his shortcomings as compared with the imagined hero will be overlooked. These silly girls will fondly imagine that the man talking to them empty words of flattery is the true hero they have longed for so ardently and who at last made his appearance. Now they feel they will be everlastingly happy.

Do you know there are hundreds, yes thousands, of young men constantly on the look-out for just such easy marks of girls?

These rascals are far more experienced in life than girls will ever be. They knew exactly what nice words to use in order to coax a girl or young woman into loving them. It does not take such vicious rakes very long before they have gained the sympathy, good will, and affection of such sentimental girls. A hard luck story, some bragging, a few words of flattery, are all that is required, and these silly girls throw themselves away to these fellows, only to be cast aside when the attraction has worn off. The names of such unfortunate girls are passed to one another by these rascals, and when one gets through with a girl another one comes to seek his sport with her.

Such a foolish girl is then used like a ball. She is thrown from one to another until they are tired of her. These disreputable men delight in boasting of the conquests they are able to make. They even make bets regarding some girl how quickly they can become acquainted with her, and how quickly they can disgrace her.

Alas, I wish it were not true what I say; I wish there were no such devils in human shape, whose one object it is to drag girls into everlasting disgrace. But we know too well of such hellish work about us, and were I to keep you in ignorance of these dangers I should be guilty of not doing my duty. I wish we could live in a world, or at least in an atmosphere, wherein sin and disgrace would be unknown; but since we must live in a world where such hellish crimes are of daily occurrence, since we live in times that look upon such crimes as nothing more than human weakness, it becomes the painful duty of parents and priests to bring you face to face with the terrible truth, that you may be able to avoid the snares set for you.

In creating the heart of woman God gave to it more tenderness, more pity, love and delicate feeling, than to the heart of man. It was all done for a good purpose, for God does all things well. God did not want the two sexes to be independent of one another, or sufficient for themselves. God created the two sexes for each other, that each might find in the other what they lack in themselves. The cold reasoning of man would be inefficient without the aid of woman's finer feeling and tenderness, as would the delicate tenderness of woman be without the reasoning faculty of man.

Because God has given to your hearts tenderness, affection and love, be sure that you use these gifts of God in a worthy and sensible manner. Never permit your natural tenderness of heart to degenerate into the kind of emotional insanity that will cause you to shed tears over a pet cat while you pass by suffering human beings without as much as a glance. To enable you the better to guard your feelings, the better to control them, I advise the observance of three rules.

First, as to novels:

Never permit yourselves to become fascinated by some mushy love story. Such stories are as harmful to your hearts and minds as are the wild west, crime and detective stories to the boyish mind.

Such stories and novels arouse the imagination to a degree utterly abnormal, and then fan into a consuming fire a passion that should remain dormant until the time when God places your hand into the hand of your husband. Then the passion of a sacred love should blaze up to be the torch that is to make light the path of life which you both are to walk unto the gates of death.

There is no reasonable excuse for wanting to devour all the new novels. Habitual novel readers will, as a rule, be found to be superficial. When you feel a want for reading, go to your parish

library, read Catholic books and Catholic papers. Moreover you should make an effort to do some solid reading. Read works of instructions that explain our holy Faith, read the lives of the saints, especially the life of your patron saint; read works on history, that you may be able to talk intelligently whenever you are asked concerning any question regarding Faith, the Church, and so forth.

If for some reason the parish library does not offer you much choice in reading, a postal card to any of our Catholic publishers will bring to your attention a list of books suitable for you.

Secondly, as to the theatre:

We may as well admit that the "movies" have come to stay, and that they form a new problem. Where, as in the case of many a doubtful play, the price of admission will keep people away, the "movies" are popular because one can go to a moving-picture show for a nickel, or a dime, and remain as long as one likes. Like plays, "movies" are not bad in themselves. Both become bad by abuse. Since the "movies" are the popular forms of present-day amusement, I must add a warning that cannot be made too urgent.

Since we learn more with the help of the eye than with the help of any of the other senses, it stands to reason that the moving picture may either be a great blessing or a great curse. It is hard to under-estimate the influence of sordid, mushy, or criminal portrayals in our "movies." Such portrayals of vice, crime or suggestive situations leave an impression upon the mind that will last for a considerable time.

The "movies" are a business, like any other business undertaking. They will furnish exactly what the people demand. If people will not go to see pictures and films that portray crime and suggestiveness, there will be no sale for such films. They would soon be taken off as not paying their expenses of production. Hence, keep

away from such performances and warn your friends about them; have them stay away with you. Whenever good, instructive films are shown, and your means permit it, attend such exhibitions and tell your friends how well pleased you were with the entertainment.

The very same rule applies to theatres. There are good plays and bad plays, and some that are neither. While we may attend a good play with a great deal of profit, others will not make us either better or worse. Bad plays and suggestive plays however, the so-called problem plays, undoubtedly tend to degrade an audience. Keep away from plays that you would not dare discuss at home with father or mother.

Finally, as to company:

Avoid the sentimental and gushy girl. You gain nothing, and are in danger of losing everything, if you permit yourself to be in any way influenced by a sentimental and lovesick girl. In vain will you look for strength and support in those who are swayed like reeds in the pond. Be a true friend of the common-sense girl, who willingly and conscientiously follows the advice of her mother. And go and do likewise.

XXXII. The Theatrical Age

My dear Children of Mary:—It seems as though many girls some time in their life get the strange idea that their names ought some day to appear in a large electric sign above the entrance of the leading theatres. Perhaps it was at a play in the parish hall when parents, uncles and aunts applauded so generously that the idea entered into the girls' brains; perhaps it was the sight of some actress that made them stage-mad; no matter how it happened, these girls get the stage fever badly because they fail to understand that acting, which seems to them so very easy, is a difficult art, the acquiring of which cost actors and actresses many an effort, and not a few humiliations and disappointments. Of the struggles and blasted hopes behind the scenes they know absolutely nothing. Some girls are gifted with fairly good voices; they are asked to join the choir; they sing a solo now and then. Such girls are likely to imagine that there was never a voice so sweet, so melodious, so strong and pathetic, so full of expression and of feeling, as their voice, and they cannot understand how people—with the exception of father and mother—can be so dense as not to recognize their superior merits. But such is life. It is hard to convince strangers of one's ability. They look at the aspiring actor or singer from a different angle. Professional critics formulate a system of rules from which they will not depart, regardless of the opinions a fond father or mother may have. What a fond mother may regard as a skillful rendering of a song a neighbor may call a shriek. What a proud father may call a very able rendering of a selection on the piano heartless strangers may call tin pan music.

Opinions, you see, differ very much. From this you may judge

that it is a mistake to look upon a verdict that is prompted by blind love as though it were the expression of an expert critic.

The stage-struck girl feels that she can do as well and better than the most popular actors. She will not be happy in any other walk in life, and she is determined to show what she can do. All other work disgusts her; if she has to work for a living her occupation appears to her drudgery, and then it will not be very long before she will lose the position she has. That such an unhappy girls becomes a real nuisance to her girl friends, and that she will lose them one after another, goes without saying.

Of course, it may seem to a girl the climax of bliss to see her picture in the daily papers, to be spoken of as a brilliant actress, to be commented upon favorably in the leading papers of the land, to have her name displayed in flaming letters on the theatres. But that, after all, is only a part of the passing show. Favorites of the stage are forgotten quickly after their brief triumph.

No one will ignore true ability and no one wishes to discourage real talent. Yet it requires considerable time for even the best qualified actress to gain a hearing, and it is by no means an easy undertaking to become successful and popular on the stage.

Where there is one success there are a thousand failures. And these thousand failures must make a living. So we find thousands of girls working for a mere living in cheap vaudeville, not to mention the many who are not even fortunate enough to obtain such a position. They must be satisfied if they can earn at least their meals by singing in restaurants all hours of the night. And there are many ambitious girls left without as much as that. They can get no engagement anywhere, and, since they consider all real work beneath their dignity, they either go hungry or go begging.

Ask those who have won their laurels on the stage whether the

life behind the footlights is all sunshine and no clouds. If they are candid they will tell you of hard struggles and of bitter disappointments, of jealousies and rivalries. Were we to know of all the trials, humiliations and anxieties the people of the stage have to undergo, for the sake of the little popularity that is given them, there would in all probability be fewer desirous of the bubble of stage fame.

The girl seeking a successful career on the stage must be able to withstand temptations of all sorts, must be able to listen to all kinds of flattery without losing her head, must be a student of literature, must be ready to work hard and perseveringly, must be willing to bear severe and discouraging criticism, must be ready to face failure rather than sacrifice her honor. And there are only a few who will stand this test. These few, of course, deserve all the credit that can be given them; they are worthy of all the success that can be gained in the short span of life. That is why there is so much room at the top of the ladder of fame.

From this you may see that the fact of a girl being stage struck does not qualify her for the stage. The stage is a business like any other business. There is no sentiment about it.

The calling for the stage is like any other calling. Only those whose talent is unmistakable should aspire to it. As a matter of fact, there is scarcely another calling that has less inducements and more worries and failures than the career of the stage.

As far as the lives of the people of the stage are concerned, it may be said the lives of actors and actresses are hardly better or worse than those of other people. In every calling we find people who are an honor to it, and others who disgrace it.

I cannot end this conference without a serious word of warning. Stage-struck girls are easily fascinated by anything that has glitter or tinsel. Such girls often fairly ache to become acquainted with

some one even remotely connected with the work behind the footlights. Why, even the piano player in a moving-picture show will have plenty of admirers among stage-struck girls.

Now, there are plenty of young fellows, and old ones for that matter, to whom the fascination of the theatre for certain young girls is well known, and they are on the lookout for such girls. To these fellows, in some way or other connected with the theatre, is largely due the evil reputation in which actor folks are held by many people. Beware of such fellows. Their intentions are bad and their morals are worse.

Do not let your emotions run away with your reason. If God has given you a voice to sing thank Him for it. But, unless you are told so positively by those who by training and experience are qualified to tell you, never think for a moment that your voice is good enough for a professional career. And remember that there is greatly more happiness off the stage than on the stage.

XXXIII. The Dancing Age

My Dear Children of Mary:—Dances have existed ever since history has been written. From time immemorial dances served the purpose of expressing various emotions of the human heart. Among vicious people dances accompanied unlawful pleasures that reduced mankind to the level of the brute. On the other hand, we read of ancient dances that were part of religious services. So we read that David danced before the Ark of God. Even at the present day it is in some Spanish countries customary to have little children dance in processions of the Most Blessed Sacrament. At no time, however, has the subject of dancing been more discussed, and possibly not since pagan times has the dance been degraded to so low a level, as at the present time.

The priest is oftentimes asked whether dancing is allowed and the answer must be qualified.

There are certain individuals whose evil passions are so easily aroused that for them *every* dance is sinful. Even dances that will cause to others no sinful thoughts or desires will be sinful for these people because for them they are the near occasion for sin.

With others the place of the dance, and the nature of the dance, will determine whether dancing is sinful for them or not.

As to the place of dancing I will state the rules that should guide your conduct.

As Children of Mary you should avoid *every* public dance. By public dances are meant all dancing parties held in public halls for any and everybody. As a rule, one finds such halls conducted

by establishments that sell liquor and where drinks are served freely. One can easily understand why such parties and places are not the proper place for any respectable girl whether Catholic or non-Catholic.

Any girl with proper regard for her reputation and honor will not frequent a place of amusement where anybody can go who has the price of admission. In such places girls dance with strangers of whose character and reputation they know nothing. The girls are asked to drink with strange men, and while the dancing with such men is bad enough, the way home in such company is even more dangerous.

From unfortunate girls and women one will learn that their first step on the downward path occurred when they attended their first public dance.

The same girl that would yell for help if a strange man accosted her in the street will willingly submit to familiarity if the same stranger approaches her at such a dance.

If such familiarity is wrong at one place how can it be respectable in another place?

What I have said about these public dance halls holds good whether or not liquor is sold there. In our days there are districts and counties where the sale of liquor is prohibited, but that fact alone does not change human nature.

From what has been said you will understand why a respectable girl should not be found in a public dance hall where anybody who has the price of admission will have the opportunity of attending. Children of Mary should be even more zealous than others in guarding their honor and their reputation, and for that reason they should avoid all places and amusements that offer to strangers an opportunity to approach them.

As to the dances themselves, the rules and observations of importance are these:

Apart from the case of those individuals, of whom I have spoken in the beginning, and for whom *every* dance is a danger of sin, dances might be divided into two classes, those that may be permissible, and those that are wrong and sinful under any and all circumstances.

Under the first heading I might mention dances such as the square dances, waltzes, and two-steps, that were the fashion a few years ago. If some of you girls come together at your own homes or the homes of your friends for a little innocent pastime, one cannot begrudge you some dancing provided no one oversteps the bounds of decency. In the company of your parents, or of the parents in the homes you are visiting, there is little danger that any one would forget himself or herself. In such surroundings no one can see harm in a dance, provided the dance is not suggestive.

At the present time, however, it almost seems as though the permissible dances were all out of date. This age is truly dance-crazy, and a dance grows in popularity in proportion as it becomes suggestive and improper. These dances are danced in cafés, restaurants and at public dances. Even old men and women are infected, and so we see young and old go through these foolish and repulsive motions.

Remember once for all that these modern suggestive dances are positively sinful for every one. If any of you should insist upon dancing these present suggestive and improper dances, it is understood as a matter of course that you leave the sodality. Whatever is sinful must be condemned, no matter how much it may be in style. There are clergy who forbid every dance. Conditions vary in different localities, and wherever priests forbid *every* dance they

have good reasons for so doing. If conditions should arise here so that even permissible dances became dangerous, it will become most certainly my duty to forbid all dancing without exception. From this you will understand that it depends upon your own conduct whether even the dancing usually considered permissible can be tolerated here.

This craze for dancing gives to many girls a false idea about young men. Girls who have the craze for dancing are likely to think that unless a young man can dance well he is of not much account. As a result, a number of girls pick their future husbands from among those who are experts in dancing. Girls can make no worse mistake than that.

While many young men enjoy dancing, one will find only a few who like such girls think that dancing is the highest ideal of life. And these young men will, as a rule, not be good for anything else. They will be poor workers and lead unsuccessful lives. As providers and supporters of a family they will make a poor showing. And it is the silly girl, the girl crazy for dancing, that will pick out these silly boys for their future husbands. These girls look for a young man who dresses well, who can dance gracefully, and who has pleasant talk. That, they think, is all that is necessary to make life one grand frolic. How mistaken such girls are in selecting their husbands is amply shown in our divorce courts which nowadays can hardly work fast enough to keep up with the rush of applications for divorce.

An earnest young man, who realizes that he must do more than dance to fight his way through life, may not be the graceful dancer a girl might wish to see; but if she selects him for her future husband she will not make a mistake.

In following the rules I have set down I wish you to remember

that dancing is not our life work. We have been made for other things. Above all, do not make the fatal mistake of picking out your future husband on the dance floor. A sensible young man, a man worth having, will never make a like mistake, and pick a silly, dance-crazy girl for his wife.

XXXIV. The Independent Age

My dear Children of Mary:—At times we see boys from sixteen to eighteen years old trying to shake off every obligation of obedience as though it meant nothing but unwarranted restraint. We feel sorry for such deluded boys, and we pity their parents. But, alas, at present we find even girls of that age acting like their misguided brothers. These girls think they know all that is to be known, and they consider obedience good enough for little children or stupid girls. For themselves obedience is unnecessary and an imposition.

There is revolt in the air nowadays, we breathe it with every breath. We find grown-up people, who ought to have better sense, rebelling against all authority, both temporal and spiritual. We find the laws of Holy Church criticised. Ingenuity is taxed to the utmost to invent excuses to free men from keeping this or that commandment. Regulations of bishops and priests are ridiculed. Some even boast of it that they will not abide by them and thereby influence others. There is no public office in the land but its incumbent is criticised, even insulted, in the daily press. Where is the respect and reverence due to the highest offices of the state?

There is revolt in the home life. What the earnest mother will forbid, the lenient father will allow, and vice versa. Children in turning from one to the other will follow the line of least resistance, and they obey the one who favors them most, or obey neither if they see that they can do so with impunity. Really, we need not wonder that youths want to shake off all restraint. The pity of it is that even girls, who by nature should be more docile and obedient, are likewise crying for freedom from the restraint of parental and divine laws.

Parents expect more sentiment and consideration, more affection and love from daughters than from sons. For that reason a daughter who strives to be as unmanageable as a wayward boy is a greater affliction.

As a rule we cannot expect children to be better than their parents, yet, we should not find them worse than their parents. Here we are very often disappointed. Sometimes we find the children of saintly parents going wrong. Thank God, we still have a goodly number of saintly fathers and mothers, and according to reason we should find their children, their sons and daughters, virtuous. Too often, however, when we enter such a home we find worldly-minded daughters. The piety of the mother, the stern righteousness of the father are looked upon as out of style, and out of harmony with present-day standards.

In all such cases outside influences are responsible for the revolt of the children.

Ask the emancipated girl whether it was one of the books or papers kept at home that turned her head. She will have to say she finds none but good Catholic papers, books and magazines to read at home. Ask her whether it is the example of parents that leads her to revolt against all authority, and she will have to admit that she sees nothing but good will and harmony in the lives of her parents. Ask her whether her parents permit her to go with unfit company, and she must say that her parents are constantly on a lookout to keep her from harm. Where is it that this girl has caught the infection of our rebellious times? It is in the shop, in the office, where she has worked. The good example at home dwindles into nothingness when compared to the bad example seen in the shop. There are little chats during work hours; there are the walks to and from work. There the mischief is done. It is the old story

of the good sowers doing their day's work and when they are not watching the enemy goes over the field sowing the cockle.

Even so, it will be objected, well brought up girls should snow more sense. The good example of a pious home life, the instructions received in a parish school, the conferences given to Children of Mary regularly every month, daily prayers and frequent Holy Communions, all these natural and supernatural helps ought to keep the hearts and minds of girls directed towards God and His holy law. In truth, these natural and supernatural helps would be enough to make each one of you a saint, provided you had the firm intention of cooperating faithfully with the grace of God.

Human nature presents a great puzzle. While our own reason may show us that we are wrong, while it will be even able to gauge the evil results that follow upon a wrong act, the will, far from following the judgment of reason, will decide upon doing wrong, regardless of consequences.

Hence, a girl may have all the advantages of saintly home environments, may have been fully instructed in her holy Faith, may, to a great extent, be able to measure the evil consequences of a wrong act, and still she may decide for that which is wrong. The graces that God bestowed are rejected by her. She has no intention of cooperating with the graces and the light God gives her. She fully knows she is doing wrong, knows the punishment that is awaiting her, but she says to herself: "I do not care what happens as long as I can have my way."

The better to understand the folly of such conduct look up to our model, the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, and behold in her the model of humble obedience and submission.

The holy Gospel tells us how humbly and faithfully she obeyed the mosaic laws even though there was no obligation for her to sub-

mit to them. Because she had conceived of the Holy Ghost, and her child was the Son of the living God, there was no obligation for her to submit to the mosaic law that required the offering of the child up to God, nor the law of purification. Yet we find her fulfilling all those laws as though she were the mother of an ordinary human being. Her love of obedience and humility was not satisfied with merely obeying the laws to which others were obliged, but she obeyed laws to which none of her sex were subject. Jewish women were obliged to come once only to the temple for the celebration of an Easter festival. Holy Scripture tells us however that the ever Blessed Virgin Mary made the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem every year, together with St. Joseph, her spouse. When the Christ-child had reached the age of twelve, He also was taken on that journey of seventy miles to Jerusalem. The journeys to the temple of Jerusalem had to be made in the spring of the year. To understand the meaning of this we need only consider the condition of our own highways in the early spring. Palestine did not even have highways; there were no trains, no electric cars. The rich travelled on the back of a donkey, and the poor walked. One can imagine the difficulties the poor must have met in making those annual pilgrimages to the temple of Jerusalem. The way led over hills and mountains, through valleys and across streams that had to be forded because bridges were never seen except near or in towns. The travelers would pass through few towns and villages, and for miles and miles through wilderness. The journey to Jerusalem and back to Nazareth was about one hundred and forty miles all told. This is the journey that Mary made every year, although the mosaic law did not oblige her to make it more than once in her life.

Contemplate then the humble submission of the ever Blessed Vir-

gin Mary in her obedience to a law to which she was not even bound. How willing the Queen of Heaven was to appear as the zealous hand-maid of the Lord! She was not satisfied unless she did even more than the law demanded.

How small we must feel when we think how we shirk in doing the Will of God. There is not a commandment of God but we have excuses for evading it. Instead of doing more than God demands of us, we are constantly trying to do less. The more obligations and duties we can evade the better we are pleased.

Compare the heroic obedience and zeal of the Blessed Virgin with the acting of a worldly girl who wants to be free from every restraint. That girl will not listen to the advice of a saintly mother, but intends to do just as she likes, she neglects every commandment of God—and, the mockery of it, calls herself a Child of Mary! What an insult to the Mother of God!

Again, turn to the Christ-child, Jesus, who at the age of twelve made that same difficult journey together with Joseph and Mary. He was not obliged to make it. Yet, He walked these hundred and forty miles to teach us that the few blocks to our church should not appear too far for us. Alas, if we are compelled to walk but half a mile to church on a hot or cold day, or the way is dusty or muddy, we are inclined to stay at home. What an answer will Christ, the Divine Judge, give to those who have broken the Third Commandment with no other excuse but that of ease and comfort!

To show the error of the craving for independence manifested by the younger generation of our day, let us remember that, as St. Luke tells us, Christ was subject to Mary and Joseph. We can never fully comprehend how much that means. The Christ-child being God He had infinite wisdom. Yet He obeyed two human beings who, however good their intentions, were liable to err. The wish of a

human being became the law a God obeyed. If we could only say that the wish of God is the law that *we* obey. Our reason, as well as our sense of duty, should naturally lead us to say that God's will or wish must be our command. The sublime submission of Christ was entirely voluntary, to give us an example. But there was another reason you may not have thought of. Man, the frail and weak creature, rebelled against His God and Maker and insisted that he would not obey the will of God. To atone to His Father for this presumption and folly, Christ humbly submitted His Divine Wisdom to the human wisdom of Mary and Joseph. He submitted to their advice, their wishes, their counsels and their commands. Try as we may, we shall never fully realize the extent and baseness of the presumption of which man is guilty in sinning, nor fully understand the marvelous submission and humiliation of Christ, the God, who condescended to obey man.

Though you may hear much at the present time about liberty, freedom and independence, it will be well for you to bear in mind that it is not these things the world aims at, but their abuse. The present drift of the times is nothing new; it is the old, old story, heard in heaven even before the creation of the world, heard when Lucifer faced God to tell Him he would not serve. Such, and nothing else, is the present demand for liberty and emancipation. The world refuses to longer serve God, and calls this revolt against God independence and freedom.

I will not serve! What a disgrace for us, the adopted children of God, to repeat the words of satan. What an awful fate to share the fate of satan!

XXXV. The Vocation for the Married Life

Preliminary Remarks

My dear Children of Mary:—Probably all of you have been present at weddings and, following the impulses of your sex, your attention was chiefly confined to the dress of the bride, the dresses and appearances of the bridesmaids and the merrymaking in general. The solemn agreement made by the new husband and wife, the blessings and exhortation of the priest were secondary in importance, if at all considered.

Very generally the deeper meanings of things are lost sight of and the superficialities that appeal directly to the senses engage our sole attention. For instance, if by chance you are present at the solemn occasion when a school friend or relative of yours is invested with the holy habit, your thoughts at such a time are hardly centered around the sublime sacrifice a young girl makes of her whole life, but rather you think of the loss you suffer in seeing one of your playmates removed from you. Together with parents, brothers and sisters, you may shed a tear or two, hoping that you may get over this loss somehow. The parents, brothers and sisters of the young novice see only the loss in their home circle. They may have a hazy notion about a sacrifice being made, but the idea of their personal loss overshadows all things else.

So, you see how short-sighted and selfish people are. God must, indeed, have great patience in dealing with us when we are so very dull, so easily moved by worldly motives.

But, to come back to our subject, let me remind you that in former conferences we devoted considerable time to the question of

vocation. The vocation or calling for the convent life was explained to you at some length. You were told of the trials and hardships, as well as of the consolation and happiness, that are to be found behind convent walls. Now since the religious vocation has been explained to you, it remains for me to explain that other vocation to which the greater majority of you will be called, the married life.

It will now be our purpose to consider this vocation, to instruct you about its obligations, the proper method of preparing yourselves for this vocation, so that, when the time comes for you to decide upon it, you may be fully prepared to live up to the duties this holy state imposes.

St. Paul calls matrimony a great Sacrament in Christ and His Church. How true the word of the Apostle of the Gentiles is we see by considering how low matrimony has fallen away from Christ and the Church, and the people of the world consider it hardly more than a grim joke. Only in Christ and His Church is matrimony the great Sacrament it deserves to be and should be for the weal of mankind.

Baptism is the most important of all Sacraments because it opens the gate of heaven to us, it makes of us children of God and heirs of His kingdom. No Sacrament is holier than the Most Holy Eucharist; no Sacrament more solemn than that of Confirmation, since it is administered by the bishops themselves; the Sacrament of Penance is a most necessary Sacrament, since by it heaven is restored to us after we have lost it by committing mortal sin; the Sacrament of Extreme Unction is another very important Sacrament, since it prepares us for a blessed death. You know that eternity depends upon the kind of death we die. Yet all these important and necessary Sacraments may be administered anywhere, in church

or at home, and at any time, day or night. Only two Sacraments are reserved for a more solemn administration. They are linked together with holy Mass for that very reason. These two Sacraments are Holy Orders and Matrimony. The Church wishes to teach us a lesson in this. We are to understand that as sacred as is the Sacrament of Holy Orders for the continuation of the priesthood, so sacred should Matrimony be for the continuation of the people of God.

For grave reasons the Church will permit the administration of the Sacrament of Matrimony outside of holy Mass, but then the solemnity and particularly the special bridal blessing will be lacking. Mixed marriages usually take place in the rectory. The Church permits them only reluctantly, she does not approve of them, much less recommend them. To show her dislike for such a dangerous union, she forbids the priest to wear any sacred vestment, stole or surplice. The couple themselves are forbidden the use of the church edifice. The priest, in his every-day clothes, merely asks the couple their mutual consent and declares them man and wife. Such a ceremony, stripped of every priestly blessing, shows more plainly than mere words that the Church is *not* in favor of mixed marriages under any consideration.

Catholic young people who desire to serve God to the best of their ability will comply with the wishes of the Church and will marry during a nuptial Mass. Being the children of God, we should not ape the ways of the children of the world, who consider the nuptial Mass old-fashioned.

And well might devout couples wish to receive all the blessings of holy Church, for married life places many burdens upon their shoulders, and the nuptial Mass will be for them a source of strength and consolation.

Apart from the crosses we must bear in accordance with the plans of Divine Providence, there are not a few crosses which we make for ourselves. So it is that we find many married couples complaining of misery and hardships for which either or both of them are the direct cause. If we could open the book of life and there read the secrets of the heart, what a revelation we should see unfolding itself before our eyes. We could there see the lives of those who received this great Sacrament of Matrimony unworthily, because there was a certain mortal sin they would not confess; we would find the lives of those revealed to us who entered upon this holy state of life with improper disposition or intention, and we would discover those who entered upon this holy state without having been called for it. Last, but not least, we would find the unfortunate ones who, in an unnecessarily protracted courtship, committed mortal upon mortal sin, instead of preparing themselves for this great Sacrament by praying earnestly. To them must be added the still more unfortunate ones to whom marriage is the only way to avoid prison. Considering all such unhappy circumstances, we need not at all be surprised to see so much misery and disappointment in married life.

Think of the many lessons you had to learn by heart, the many prayers you had to say for weeks and weeks, before your first holy Communion. Remember how you were told to always prepare yourselves well for the reception of holy Communion. If your memory will still serve you, you will remember that we should prepare ourselves well for *every* Sacrament we are to receive in our lives.

Sacraments are either a blessing or a curse to us. All depends upon how we prepare ourselves for them.

From this, then, you should understand that certain things are

demanded of you when you decide that you are called for the state of matrimony. It will not be enough that you become enamored of some young man and go to the priest to have the banns announced and to tell him on what day you want to be married.

First of all, you must pray that you may become sure of your vocation. If you do think that you are not called for the convent, it does by no means follow that marriage is the only alternative. It may be that God wants you to lead a single life in the world. It is your duty to pray, and to ask God to let you know what He wants you to be and do. And if, after prayer, you feel that you are called for the married state, it will be your further duty to pray that God may send you the right man. That you should consult your parents in this most important matter goes without saying. And when the right man has come, then you will have to offer prayer upon prayer, that you may remain pure in heart and mind, in body and soul.

This is, in short, an outline of the preparation that is absolutely necessary for the reception of this great Sacrament of Matrimony.

In the conferences that are now to follow, the method of preparation will be explained in detail, while the dangers with which you will be beset will also be shown to you more fully. It remains for you to attend all these conferences, and to pay strict attention to them, so that when the time comes for you to act and decide, you may be fully competent to deal with the question the proper solution of which will determine your temporal as well as your eternal happiness.

XXXVI. Company Keeping

My dear Children of Mary:—In the good old days, in the marrying days of your parents and grandparents, the matter of match-making was, as a rule, left to the wisdom of parents. The parents of a marriageable son or daughter would look around among their own friends to see whether they could find a suitable match for their child. What made those matches so successful was the fact that the parents, well understanding their child, would look for the one that would fit perfectly as far as parents could judge. Knowing the characteristics of their child, they would understand what qualities the other party should have, in order to provide harmony and peace in the married life of their children.

When the parents of a youth had found a family with a marriageable daughter that would be a good match for their son, arrangements were made for a visit, during which the parents would discuss the proposition. If they agreed, the young man was introduced to the young woman and the young couple were made to understand that it was the wish of both parents for them to marry. The young people would consider it a matter of obedience to take the life partner whom their parents had selected, and all that remained was to set the date for the wedding.

In our own day this custom would appear out of place, because it does away with what we call the freedom of choice; yet it must be said with all due regard for this same freedom of choice there are to-day more unhappy marriages than in these same good old days, when parental authority was the only law in these things.

Needless to say, the old-fashioned system was at times abused; but judging from present-day results, the many unhappy homes,

the evil of divorce, the numerous fatherless children, and childless mothers of our day, do by no means speak well for the present system of absolute freedom of choice.

As a general thing the marriages in those times were far happier than those of the present day, because older heads, who understood human nature better and knew the ways of the world, did not make the mistake which young people make only too frequently. But the good old days are gone forever. This does not mean, however, that now you are the sole judges about your company keeping. By all means secure for yourselves the benefit of older and wiser heads, by consulting your parents in this most important of all questions. Picking out your partner for life is no small matter. Many things must be considered when you contemplate this step. Many mistakes can be committed, and in all probability they can never be undone. Left to your own resources with your lack of experience, with your ignorance of the ways of the world, you would in all likelihood make a big blunder, and since the injury is one that can not be undone, you would regret your error throughout your whole life.

Where one mistake was made in the old system ten are made in our days. Young women, especially, are too much inclined to look at appearances only, and no father and mother worthy of that sacred name should stand by idly and permit their daughter to make such a terrible blunder; they must warn the girl. It is as natural for them to seek to protect you as it is for a mother hen to protect her little flock of chicks. Some day you will understand the meaning of this more fully.

The answer often given to parents, when in the estimation of their smart daughter they go too far in offering advice, is something like this: "Who is going to marry him; you or I?" An answer like this ends all argument, and with breaking heart father or

mother must look on, must witness the ruin and misfortune which their child brings down upon her own head. Could the misfortune be averted? Yes, if the daughter would only listen to reason; but she will not listen. She bluntly tells her mother that she is doing the marrying and does not care for advice.

Two or three months after her wedding this same daughter will hasten to her mother to complain most bitterly about her husband. At last she has found him out. She has been most infamously abused, deceived, betrayed. She had thought her husband was all gold and she found him made of ordinary clay. His words no longer abound with sweetness, He stays away entire nights, does not give her any money, saves nothing, drinks to excess, and gives her black and blue marks instead of kisses. Yes, he has changed. The strange thing about it is that what the daughter reports is not real news. Her father and mother knew that all this would happen before their daughter married this man. They could have told her if she had only wanted to listen. The fact was she did not want to listen. No sooner would the mother begin to mention some faults of the intended husband of her daughter than she was told to mind her own business. All such talk was nothing but idle gossip, even slander, some other woman is sore that her girl is not the lucky bride, and if more is said the usual retort is again: "Who is going to marry him, you or I?" In truth this means, "You, mother, have nothing to say. I am going to marry that man and if the whole world should be against him. I am going to marry him, and if things go wrong I am myself to blame. I know him better than you could ever know him, for he told me things he would not tell you. So I think I know what I am doing. I am not blind. He loves me and I love him, and I know what I am doing."

After such a heartless reply to the good advice and tender care

of a mother nothing can be done. Time only will show soon enough that the mother was more farseeing than the daughter. Nevertheless the daughter does soon come home with a sad tale. If she had married the worthless scamp at the command of her parents, she might indeed have all the reason in the world to charge them with a crime. But it was all her doing. She had free choice and took the worthless fellow for a husband. It is natural for us to seek sympathy even though we deserve it not. So the deceived daughter will hasten to her mother for sympathy. No matter how guilty we may feel at heart, we will try to shift the blame upon other shoulders in trying to clear ourselves at least in the sight of others. So the unhappy daughter will say: "Mother, you knew I was inexperienced and foolish; why did you not forbid the man your house; why did you not forbid me to marry him?" And the mother will remind her daughter that she would not listen to the mother's advice. "Did you not tell me to mind my own business and all that? Really, you have no one to blame for your misery but yourself. All you can do now is to suffer patiently. You have been disobedient and now you must face the penalty. All you can do now is to suffer and pray, pray and suffer. God may then in His mercy turn evil into good."

To avoid such misfortunes I can not too strongly advise you to listen to your parents. By no means undertake any company-keeping unless you have received the consent of your parents. It should not be as much yourself as your parents who will decide this matter for you.

If you have a young man in mind, with whom you think you could be happy, ask your father and mother what they think of him. If they tell you that he is a young man of good habits, of a good home and of good character, you may invite him to call upon

you. No one will welcome him more sincerely than your father and mother. He will be made to feel like one of the family the very first visit.

But if your parents know of any bad quality in the man, which of course he will try to hide from you, your parents will be the first to warn you. They may even know more about him than they might like to tell. Let one word of warning be enough for you, and from that day on treat him as a stranger. Only in later years, when you perhaps see that same man making another woman miserable, will you understand how wise and how farseeing your parents were in keeping you away from a man who would have made your own life miserable if you had given him the opportunity. If your parents do not like to see a certain young man come to see you, drop him quietly and as hurriedly as you can; the sooner the better. No necessity of giving him time to make explanations or excuses, for such talk is only a waste of time. Drop him. That is all.

I wish indeed it were not necessary for me to talk of a certain topic in connection with this subject, but I should fail in my duty were I to pass it over silently. I have reference to secret meetings with young men, away from your home. If you are to receive any male company, the place is at your home and nowhere else. No meetings at corners of streets or in parks. In the first place this is always a sign of disobedience to parents, and, secondly, those meetings scarcely ever pass without sins the like of which should be unknown among the children of God. At *no* time should any respectable young woman meet a young man away from her home. Some girls may consider it a huge joke and a frolic to meet a young man at some street corner, when they know he is not welcome at her house; but the joke, if joke it is, is invariably on the girl her-

self. If a young man is not good enough to come to see you at your home, you are *too* good to trust your character and reputation into his keeping. A girl has only to meet some men secretly on street corners, or in parks, to lose at once her good name. As soon as people know that they think they know enough.

Under no condition should you therefore ever entertain the thought of seeing a young man away from your home. It is the first step down the grade; the rest follow, and then there is no return.

I hope I shall not have to mention such a disagreeable topic again. This should be enough.

When a number of young men callers come to your house, and you do not know to which of them you should give preference, you will act very prudently if you consult your parents. They may not have an objection to any one of them. Any one of them would seem to be a good man; yet you do not know what choice you should make. In that case you will ask your parents to give you the benefit of their experience and advice. Being better judges of human nature than you, and having gathered much experience in their long life, they are often able to tell you what is best for you to do; they can probably help you decide which of the young men would be the best one for you.

Some parents there are, alas, who do not care much about the choice their marriageable sons and daughters make as long as they marry money. Very frequently such plottings end disastrously for both parents and children, because love and happiness can not be bought like a pound of sugar. Apart, however, from this exceptional case of foolish parents, parents should always be the advisers in this important question of company keeping, and their advice should be considered as law.

There happen rare cases when parents attempt to exert undue influence. In such cases the daughter should consult others besides her parents, especially her parish priest, so that a proper solution of the difficulty might be brought about.

While there may be some happy marriages where the two parties are not equal, or not nearly so, in wealth, age, learning and position, many such unions are unhappy. Where unprejudiced people can see no harm in such a marriage it may be safe; but, unless parents are thoroughly unreasonable, they should be the best judges in this matter.

As for yourselves, then, you had better not aspire to a union in which the other party is either more or less than you. The happiest marriages are found among those who take life partners of their own class.

A wrong ambition has often wrought much havoc; but to hitch worldly ambition to the matrimonial cart invariably invites disaster.

XXXVII. Preparation for Company Keeping

My dear Children of Mary:—It should, in the first place, be understood that company keeping is not to be considered either a prank or a pastime. Secondly, remember that in the matter of company keeping I take it for granted that the young man and the young woman should be nearly of the same age, the young man perhaps a few years older, but certainly not younger than the girl.

When an old bachelor or widower of sixty or more persuades a girl of sixteen or eighteen to become his bride, the world does not form a complimentary opinion of either. Again, the world laughs when an old maid or widow of fifty seeks to marry a boy of twenty.

Company keeping, or courtship, being the introduction to matrimony, it stands to reason that both parties contemplating married life should be fully competent to enter upon the duties of this holy state of life. Hence we may speak of a preparation for courtship.

Always supposing that your parents approve of your choice, of what should your preparation to become housewives and mothers consist? The answer is that you should practically be able to perform all the work that your own good mother does in your home.

When your mothers were girls of your age they practically knew and did the work they do to-day. As girls of fourteen they could cook and bake, sew and mend, scrub and wash, and help their mothers intelligently in all household duties. They could sweep, dust, and make beds, they knew how to take care of furniture, carpets and curtains, to make them look almost like new even though they had been in use for years. They could make a room look tidy, and keep it that way.

To-day the daughters of well-to-do parents go to high school or college with no other purpose in mind but of killing time. Part of what they learn there is very impractical, and the remainder will be forgotten soon after graduation day, because they have no thought of ever making any practical use of the knowledge they gained in these schools. Still, the years of high school or college pass on pleasantly. There are class meetings, outings, hops, and so on to furnish a constant variety of pastimes. And so the young lady grows up to be eighteen or twenty, without knowing how a scrub-brush should be handled, or whether linens should be blued before or after boiling. She can not even make an ordinary breakfast, much less a substantial dinner.

During her high school career she has learned to love a very nice young man, a fellow student, and her graduation day will be spoiled unless she can expect to marry that young man soon after. But, is *she* prepared to take charge of a home of her own?

Let us take another case. The parents are not wealthy and their daughter must go to shop or factory, so that her earnings will help to support the family. This young girl goes to work every day, and at the end of the week she brings her earnings home to her mother. In the morning she dresses, eats, and goes to work. Her mother has to make her bed, sweep her room, and wash her clothes. In the evening this girl comes home, sits down to eat, and rises from the table to dress for receiving visitors. She, too, has found a young man, who takes her out to parties, dances and shows. Indeed, she may have three or four young men who take her out, each one thinking perhaps that he is the only one. Will this girl expect to remain in shop or factory all her life? Indeed not. She will want to marry, if for no other reason than at least to get out of the daily grind of shop work. Is *she* prepared any better than

the high school girl for married life and its duties? Neither of them are prepared to take upon themselves the responsibilities of married life, because neither knows anything about managing a home. It is a sad mistake for both of them to look forward to a life the responsibilities of which they can not undertake to perform.

I know of a man who earns a hundred dollars a month and yet his wife is unable to make ends meet. The family is always hard pressed. When he earned seventy dollars a month they were in the same condition, and if he should bring home two hundred a month it would be the same thing. The truth of the whole matter is simply that the wife does not know anything about household affairs. She throws away what could comfortably keep two small families. From the time that this girl left school she worked in a store. At the age of twenty she left the store and married.

There are many girls who wish to marry even though they have not the remotest idea of what housework means, or how it must be done. They have no idea of management, and of economy they do not know the meaning. But marry they will, even if they can not make a cup of coffee.

For her own future welfare a girl should not accept the attentions of a young man unless she can do the house work as well as her mother does it.

A certain young lady, who had finished her high school course at twenty, and had taken a postgraduate course in china painting and other such arts, resolved to get married. About eight weeks before marriage she asked her mother to give her lessons in cooking. But I fear that if it took her fourteen years to pass through twelve grades of school, she could not learn very much of the science of housekeeping in the short time of two months. She reminds me of a young wife who once cried most bitterly as her

husband came home from work. She met him at the door, telling him how she had baked biscuits and how Fido had stolen and eaten them. Her husband comforted her, saying, "Never you mind, dear, we can get another dog."

A girl who thinks she is called to the married state should properly prepare herself for it. She should know all the details of household work. She should be able to do all kinds of housework, such as washing, baking, cooking, scrubbing. She should know the meaning of economy, should be able to make at least her house-dresses. If she knows more of dressmaking so that she can alter, repair, or even make her own street dresses, so much the better. But at least she should know enough to make her own house-dresses, aprons, dresses for her children, and so on. She should know how to prepare food, so that neither health nor good humor will suffer by eating the food she cooks. She should know how to make use of left overs; if she is a good cook she will be able to make them so palatable that no one will suspect he is eating remnants of the day before. And then there is the matter of neatness. Cleanliness and neatness can not be taught in a correspondence school. It must be taught right at home. And the training in neatness and cleanliness must begin when the child begins to walk. A room may not have fine furniture or carpets; but a competent wife will know how to arrange that furniture prettily and how to take good care of it. That home will have a comfortable air about it. It will look cheerful, while the richly furnished room of another house, where the wife is not trained in the thorough management of a home, will look untidy and uninviting.

That a thorough knowledge of household work can not be learned in a week or month, not even in a year, goes without saying.

The training for such an important task as the management of

a home is started by a prudent mother when her daughter is six years of age. A wise mother will know how to combine work with play, and the little tot will take the very first and most important lessons without realizing the work. As the child grows older and stronger, the wise mother will add to the work, without neglecting the child's love for play, so that at the age of ten the little girl has become a real help to mother.

After that the girl should continue in her work of helping mother, even though she goes to high school or shop. Her housework will seem easier for her from day to day, she grows more experienced in it, and is fully able to take charge if mother should be absent or incapacitated.

Although no work is more necessary than housework, the impression has of late gained ground that housework is a disgrace.

Girls who must go to work will invariably seek work in a shop or factory, while girls who are not obliged to work will consider housework a degrading drudgery. Yet they all without exception are looking forward to a time when they can establish their own home. That the establishment of a home implies the ability and willingness to do the work necessary to keep up the home, they do not begin to understand.

If there is one idea of these modern times that you must get out of your head, it is the one that housework is degrading work. No manual labor is degrading. And the work for which woman as wife and mother is fitted by an allwise God can never, and should never, be considered a disgrace. If it is a disgrace then it was a disgrace for your mothers to work for you.

Do not worry about the complexion of your hands; your mothers have hands they would not exhibit in a fashion show as models of

color and symmetry. As the birds were made to fly and the fish to swim, so are we made to *work*.

Much though you may hear about the efficiency of physical culture to develop the gracefulness of the body, the old-fashioned exercise by way of work is far better.

A broom taken hold of in the proper way and worked vigorously will do a great deal more to develop arms, chest and neck than any kind of physical "torture" could accomplish. And in the meantime you have helped mother.

Hence do not make the foolish blunder of thinking that housework is a disgrace.

And before concluding I will let you into a little secret. A sensible young man, who in coming to see you means business, would rather see you with a tidy apron helping mother, than in the finest dress suit. That apron and your readiness to help mother tells him more than you could say in many words.

A sensible young man does not want a fine doll for his wife, but a real common sense girl, one who is not afraid of doing her full share of the household work.

XXXVIII. Preparation For Matrimony

My dear Children of Mary:—Keeping in mind the suggestions of the last conference, it is, I think, necessary to devote a chapter to the preparation which you have a right to expect of a young man who comes to see you with the intention of matrimony.

Many girls are making the grave mistake of accepting the attentions of young men who are by no means fit to bear the burden of married life.

Taking for granted that you yourself are fully competent to take charge of your future home, it should appear to you as a matter of course, that he, into whose hands you are willing to place your future happiness, should be able to provide you with that home. Here is where girls will make mistakes. A smooth talker, a nobby dresser, a fancy dancer, will oftentimes make more impression upon a silly girl than a sensible young man, who, while he may lack style, may have a substantial bank account.

A sensible young man will never think of proposing to a girl unless he is certain that he is able to provide for her wants. It is the ambition of his life to establish a home of his own and, until he sees his way clear, he will never presume to ask any girl to share his lot. Not all young men, however, are so sensible, and it is the duty of the young woman and her parents to find out whether the young man who calls regularly is really able to provide a home.

Some young men will keep company even though they must borrow the money with which to buy a box of candy or some flowers. Why, young men have been known to actually steal the money necessary to take a girl to a show. And many girls are

foolish enough to accept the attentions of such good-for-nothing young men, even though their parents disapprove. Of course, it never reflects creditably upon a young woman to accept gifts from such young men; but those that seek nothing but a good time never stop to ask questions of propriety. And then, in a rush of passion, the fatal step is taken, against the advice of parents and conscience, and the rest of the life will not be long enough for all the regrets of that hasty and foolish marriage.

Ask any of the thousands of disappointed women, who must seek their daily bread by finding work of any kind—washing, scrubbing, housecleaning, and so on—whether they have not made a sad mistake in selecting their husbands; ask those who must go back to shop and factory after marriage, the unhappy women who work all day and coming home must do their housework when other women take their well deserved rest, whether they were fortunate in picking the right husband, and all will say without exception that they permitted themselves to be talked into marriage because the man was a smooth talker, a good dresser or a fancy dancer, though as a bread-winner a total failure. These unhappy women were duly warned by parents and friends, but thought they knew more than all other people. They felt that the advice not to marry a certain young man was simply a matter of petty jealousy and envy, and that ill will was at the bottom of the various hints, insinuations and suggestions. But now that the young man openly shows what he is, the unhappy wife understands that, after all, her parents, friends and other advisers were right.

What heartaches a wife must suffer, after the short dream of love is over and she wakes up to the reality! Others had warned her that the young man was a drinker, that he could not hold any position for more than two or three weeks because he was too lazy

to work. Alas, it *was* the truth. There was no other girl silly enough to desire her good-for-nothing young man. And who is there to whom this unhappy woman can go? No one cares to listen to her troubles, and if she should rashly pour out her heart to a neighbor she may be told that nobody bade her marry such a poor specimen of a husband.

She has to bury her sorrow and disappointment in her heart. Who knows whether even her children will one day listen to her. She does not deserve as much as that, since she herself refused to listen to her mother.

There are many, yes, a great many, of such unfortunate wives and mothers. Pick up the daily papers, read the court notices, the growing number of divorces, and you will find that young girls make dreadful mistakes in the selection of their husbands; mistakes that could very easily be avoided if parental advice were better heeded.

Now ask yourselves the question whether *you* should throw your life away for some worthless husband who is too lazy to work.

If the question is put to you in a general way you will, of course, say: Never. Never do *you* intend to throw away your happiness for a worthless man. Nevertheless every one of you runs considerable danger of doing this very thing. You are in as great danger of ruining your lives as others who have made the very mistake about which you are now being warned. Others heard the same warning, but they knew better. For that reason you should not accept the attentions of every Tom, Dick or Harry, who comes along.

Ask questions, and if you receive reliable information that the young man is worthless, drop him. No excuses are acceptable, no waste of time is safe. The sooner you drop such a character the

better for you. To give to such a useless and worthless man any time of grace is a loss of time. At that very time a respectable young man may have the desire of becoming acquainted with you; but your dallying with a worthless scamp disgusts him and he looks elsewhere.

Poets and artists will weave so much beauty into love and courtship that one is fairly carried away with the charm of this grand passion. But before you permit yourselves to be carried away with the dreams of love and poetry, I would earnestly ask you to give to the common sense and the practical side of it a fair hearing.

Consult your parents as to whether the young man who pours sweet nothings into your willing ears will really be able to make you happy. Find out where the dollars and cents will come to pay for furniture, rent, and three square meals every day. Find out what manner of a workman he is, whether he can hold a position and what the chances are for promotion. Find out about his habits. Is he inclined to save? Does he spend all he earns? Does he go with a fast set of young men? Does he drink much? Is he bent upon taking in every show, every excursion or dance? Does he stay away from work whenever he happens to feel like it? If you accept his attentions it is your duty to be correctly informed about all these matters, for upon such conditions will your happiness rest. You are very, very foolish if you take every young man's word about himself. He may have posted himself about your state of affairs, your probable share of your parental estate, or the money you may have in your own right. As a rule the people who are too lazy or too dishonest to keep any position for more than two or three weeks are, like the children of the world, far wiser in their schemes than the people who render a dollar's worth of work for a dollar of pay. If you were absolutely without means of any kind

such a schemer would never come near you. From this, then, you should see how important it is to be upon your guard.

Do not pretend that you are clever, that you will steal a march on your parents or friends—the joke is all on you if you permit an unworthy scamp to pester you with his attentions. Do not imagine you can convert a worthless man after marriage. And if you are misled by such a man, do not look for sympathy or pity, because all the world will tell you it serves you right, you should have known better.

In order, then, to avoid the mistakes that can never be undone, consult your parents. Your father and mother will be best able to inform you about the real worth of a suitor. It will not take them very long to find out.

And, if your parents have good reason to tell you that the young man has bad habits, that he is often found with drinking companions, and with men and women whose reputation is doubtful, or if they inform you that the young man is too lazy to work, that he is not trustworthy, such information should be enough for you to thoroughly discourage any further attentions from him. In the meantime you should not forget to thank your parents for the information they have given you.

It were, indeed, well for girls to bear in mind that the reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony does *not* change human nature. If a young man is a bad character, if he is a spendthrift, drinker, gambler or idler before marriage, the Sacrament will not of itself make of him a model Catholic man. He has to be that *before* he receives the Sacrament of Matrimony.

It is, then, your duty to see to it that the young man who wishes you to become his wife is a good young man. If he is that before

marriage, you have reasons to hope that he will be a good husband after marriage.

So many women have tried to reform husbands, and so many have failed miserably, that it will never do for you to repeat the mistakes of the many that have made failures of their lives. Let the knowledge that pitch is black be enough for you. There is no necessity for you to soil your fingers with it to convince yourselves that it *is* black.

XXXIX. The Unhappy Choice

My dear Children of Mary:—In all my discourses to you it is understood that your choice of a husband should be none else but a Catholic. Such is the intention and wish of holy Church. There are certain young women who imagine they are so cultured and polished that they must look among non-Catholics for a mate of equal worth. Such exalted young women will tell you that a Catholic young man is too old-fashioned, too stupid for them. They will admit there are earnest, hardworking young men among Catholics, but they lack polish, culture and "up-to-dateness." A Catholic young man will be unable to share in her tastes and ambitions and so she must look elsewhere for a husband who will in all things be her match. And after all, she says, she is not looking for religion but for a congenial home, and for a man who can appreciate her culture. If she can find such a model man the question of religion is only of secondary importance.

In vain will such silly girls look for true happiness, for they neither know what it is nor deserve it.

For some girls a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. It were far better for many of our high school girls to have learned cooking, washing and sewing, instead of the various sciences of which they gain only a smattering, that will never be of any practical use to them.

The Catholic young woman who thinks she is so far superior to any Catholic young man that she feels she must cultivate the friendship of young men of other belief—or of no belief—deserves exactly what she is looking for: disappointment and a life of misery.

It should therefore be understood by all of you that you must

find your future husband among young men of your own faith, if you wish to escape the dire consequences that invariably attend mixed marriages.

Yet, I would not have you believe that *every* young man of your faith is a good young man. Just because a young man is a Catholic is by no means a guarantee that he is perfect or a safe choice. Indeed, I feel in duty bound to warn you most seriously against some Catholic young men.

In the first place I must warn you to beware of the extremely "popular" young man, the young man whom everybody calls by his first name, the young man who can not let a dance or show or excursion go by without taking a prominent part in it. This sort of young men is to be regarded with suspicion. It is all right to be popular, to be agreeable, pleasant, and of good cheer. But we must not overlook the fact that a certain kind of popularity must be bought. And one whom all people call a jolly good fellow has to pay a goodly price for the sunshine of popular favor. One must be a good spender to be considered a jolly good fellow. In vain may you expect happiness in a marriage with a man who is too popular to stay at home with you. As a rule people care little for the wife of the popular young man. If she appears in company with her popular husband she will be considered an intruder. She will soon learn that her best place is right at home. Whereas the wife might want to save a little for a rainy day, her popular husband will spend the money to keep up his reputation for popularity. Do not imagine that you will be able to reform the man who is accustomed to the flattery and admiration of his set. It has been tried too often without result. The first few weeks of married life may keep him home; but no sooner does the novelty wear off than he is found with his companions of former days. They will tell him

how much they have missed him. Of course, they did. Who else would buy as many drinks as he! And how they will pity him and tease him about being henpecked. Must a man be put into a cage just because he marries? Must he work from Monday to Saturday without going about his pleasure? Since the man earns the money, why should he not be allowed to spend it! Such are the things the popular married man is told. A few drinks with his boon companions will put him in a quarrelsome and ugly mood, and when upon his return home he sees, or imagines to see, reproach in the young wife's glances he will denounce her, and there is the first quarrel, to be followed by many, many others. From that day on their married life means constant discord and worse.

Then the girl who marries the popular young man learns that she has not found a home but a boarding-house. Her husband may give her money for clothes, meals and the like, he will eat at home—sometimes—and spend his evenings at the club or in the saloon. Unless petted and flattered by admirers he will not feel happy. And so long as he is able to pay the price he will be petted and people will laugh at his jokes. Of course, it will not do for his wife to tell him that people are making a fool of him.

Another sort of young man you must avoid is the drinking one. The girl who marries a drunkard to reform him must expect very little, if any, happiness. If the drunken husband finds her some work, such as washing and scrubbing, she is fortunate indeed. As a rule, the wife of a drunkard will not even be able to keep the money she earns by her work. The husband will want it, and he will get it by means fair or foul.

By no means do I mean to say that the young man who takes an occasional glass of beer is disreputable or unreliable. This, like smoking and playing cards, is harmless if these things are kept

within reasonable bounds. On the other hand, the absence of these things does not necessarily imply strength of character or a saintly disposition. Smoking, drinking, playing cards or dancing are not evils in themselves. Hence the man who sees harm in an innocent game of euchre certainly lacks mental balance. Such people are fanatics.

It is often urged that because things in themselves harmless often lead to excess, we should for this very reason altogether abstain from them, because that will prevent the danger of excess.

But if we were to avoid everything that might be disastrous in certain cases we would have to abolish railways, automobiles, the telegraph, in fact all the skill of man has accomplished because men have lost their lives in the pursuit of all these things. There is nothing that can not be abused or turned to evil use.

What is needed for the right use of all things is strength of character, assisted by the virtues of temperance and moderation.

From this, then, you should learn that though refusing the attentions of the popular young man and of the drunkard you need not become too critical. After all you will have to look for your husband right here on earth and not in the clouds, and while every young man will have his slight shortcomings, just as every girl has hers, it ought not to be difficult with due prudence and proper advice to tell whether a young man is likely to prove a good husband or not.

XL. The Unhappy Choice (*Continued*)

My dear Children of Mary:—In my previous comments on the unhappy choice of husbands, I have by no means exhausted the subject. There are still other varieties of men against which it is necessary for you to be on guard. I feel I should point out a few more specimens to you, for should you have the ill-fortune to decide in favor of any of them, that which would follow in married life would deserve the name which General Sherman gave to war.

I must, for instance, also warn you against the young man who cannot hold a position.

A young man may ask you for your company, but that does not mean that the young man is particularly concerned about your welfare. There is not a worthless idler or scoundrel who does not want at least one woman to share his fate.

A young man may be afraid of work, but he wants to marry. He will attempt to relate his misfortunes in an effort to arouse your sympathy. He will tell you that his is the sad old story of the employer attempting to recall the slavery days, and he pictures his just resentment of such action. In his cunning way he will depict the injustice of the employer. That is his excuse for "quitting" so often. You may later learn that this young man simply has the habit of "quitting." Quite a bad habit, to be sure. He quits a job every few weeks and then spends a few weeks looking for another.

It is evident that a young man who depends upon his weekly earnings for his living can not afford to spend half his time in looking for positions. There is nothing to be earned while looking for work. Yet he needs money for his livelihood, and—let us not

forget—his pleasure. When the year is over he finds that his wages have not been enough to pay his expenses. The shortage resulting from his habit of "quitting" increases as the years go on, and instead of being able to save a portion of his salary, the debts contracted while periodically looking for positions weigh him down. And such an imprudent man wants to keep company! Yes, he even wants to marry.

Do I hear you say, "This will never happen to any of us?" It happens only too often, especially if the man—and this is generally the case—is a good talker, possibly a good dancer and, above all, a handsome young man. Then there is all the more reason to be on your guard.

The man who can not hold a position before marriage will not become a marvel of industry after. But strange to say, the girls that are susceptible to the wiles of such men are more numerous than might be supposed.

Let me open the book of life for you and read you a chapter from the life of a family.

A wealthy couple of one of our large cities had but one regret. God did not bless their union with children. So, trying to do a good work, they adopted a little girl of six years. The girl was given their name and made the heiress of all they had. That little girl had all the reasons in the world to be grateful. She was given as complete an education as her parents' money could give her. She was placed in charge of the best teachers and her friends foretold a brilliant future for her. As she grew up, the high position of her parents opened the doors of high society. Young men of good reputations and fair prospects courted her.

One day the aged people found to their great amazement that the girl had left the house during the night and had disappeared. The

police were notified, detectives were put on the trail, the news of the disappearance was flashed over the wires from one end of the country to the other, since it was feared some crime had been committed, because jewelry and money were missed at the same time. The old foster-parents were heartbroken when even with the help of the police and detectives no clue could be found.

After some time, however, a detective located the young woman in one of the western cities, half-starved in a garret. The facts of her disappearance were soon welded together. Attending a music-class she met a gullable, handsome young man, and, fearing that her foster-parents would not readily consent to his company, she agreed to elope with him, making sure to take some money with her to give the young man a start. After proving himself to be a man of the proper sort, she intended returning home with her husband to prove her wisdom in selecting a poor man who could make his mark in life, instead of a rich man who had nothing to live for. Her plan may sound real plausible, but it failed to materialize. The young man soon abandoned her to shift for herself, and thus forsaken she became the mother of a child. Her foster-father died of a broken heart, but the foster-mother generously took the girl once more to her home. There was, of course, no chance for a decent marriage after that for the girl, even after the death of the scamp who induced her to leave home. But would you believe it, this foolish young woman eloped a second time after a few years!

When I met that gentle old lady and heard her story, she ended it with these words: "I have done my part faithfully. If she prefers that life to the one she had and her first lesson had no effect, let her now bear the consequences."

Upon the sea of matrimony we find many wrecks. But these are

by no means all, since only the driftwood is found on the surface. The wrecks that lie at the bottom of the ocean are unknown to us. We know neither their extent nor their number. The greatest amount of suffering, of blasted hopes, of murdered love, we will never know until the day of judgment.

If it were in our power to investigate all these wrecks we would learn that the woman in every case bears the greater part of the suffering and disgrace. Yet, much though we may pity a woman for her misery and shame, the fact remains that she is much to blame.

Too many foolish girls are led astray by the talk of the type of young men I have pictured to you to-day. A little smooth talk will go farther than the soundest parental advice.

The old saying: "Pity is akin to love," ought to put you on your guard. Pity is indeed a beautiful trait; but it should not be applied where it does not belong. A worthless young man who is a better talker than worker does not deserve pity. Indeed, who will pity you if you make a failure of your life? And even if they would pity you, what good would it do you? The misery for which you must take the blame will not be undone by mere pity.

In order that your lives may not become such wrecks upon the sea of matrimony, turn a deaf ear to the smooth talk of such worthless young men.

Where daughters follow the advice of their parents we find comparatively few unhappy marriages. God has countless ways of punishing disobedience. So it is that by far the greater number of unhappy marriages are among those contracted against the outspoken wishes of parents.

XLI. The Unhappy Choice (*Continued*)

My dear Children of Mary:—I said in a former conference that it is idle and useless to marry a man to reform him. In illustration of this fact I have reserved another class of young men for to-day's discussion, so that if any such should want to call on you, you may be on your guard. This sort of young man may be hard working, industrious, saving, and all that; but he will have one great fault nevertheless. He is only nominally a Catholic. He will be found going to church on *some* days, such as Christmas, Easter, or Pentecost; he will receive the Sacraments once a year, he will think nothing of going to a dance on Saturday and sleep all Sunday forenoon, because he attaches no importance to the hearing of Holy Mass.

This young man will boast of having advanced ideas about religious matters. His regard of all religions as being alike in merit he considers a remarkable instance of his unprejudiced mind, his broadness of thought. Gladly will he tell you that he has not objections to anyone going to church every Sunday, of letting others believe as they see fit, of going to Confession as often as they like; but he wants it understood that nobody should presume to influence him in his religious convictions.

This young man will tell a young lady that he has absolutely no objections to her going to church all she likes, but that when he marries he will want to do exactly as he sees fit. And then, when that little matter is understood by both parties what can there be in the way of a happy marriage! Religion, after all, he will say, is a strictly private and personal affair, in which one must act to suit one's self, and when that is understood two people ought to be able to live together in perfect contentment.

Now, girls, if you are wise, you will not listen to such a young man. Let such a young man be ever so good a dresser, let him be ever so handsome, let him be the best of providers—he will never be able to make your life happy if you should, after marrying him, try to live up to your holy religion. There would be one way only for you to gain a little happiness on earth, and that would mean your giving up your God. But you can not do that and gain *eternal* happiness.

Consulting the experiences of the past we find invariably that they who boast most about broadmindedness, freedom of thought and liberty, apply this freedom only to themselves. The moment a Catholic wishes to serve God as *his* conscience dictates to him, that boasted broadmindedness is at an end. This broadminded husband will ask every liberty for himself. To be an infidel is broadmindedness; but if the Catholic wife wants to go to Mass, or to Confession, that is no longer a case for broadmindedness. To undertake to do all the priests preach, why, that is idiocy! To pray, why, that is silly. To tell one's sins in Confession, why, that is ridiculous! Lukewarm Catholics have to use big words, like broadmindedness, freedom of thought and the like, to cover their ignorance and lack of faith.

Hence a marriage with such a poor specimen of a Catholic will not be happy.

The feeling that is buried deepest in the human heart, the feeling that is most easily injured and then rarely healed, the feeling capable of the most heroic efforts, struggles and sufferings, the feeling that can even conquer death, is our religious feeling. All other impulses and feelings of which the human heart is capable are as nothing in comparison to that feeling.

We may have deep-rooted principles, or prejudices, regarding

politics, arts or sciences; but, deep though they may be, there is still the possibility of changing our view regarding political or scientific questions when our reason tells us that we have been in the wrong.

Our religious feeling rests upon a higher authority than reason, namely, upon the Word of God. Hence it is, that no fervent Catholic can ever become a faithful Protestant. When has it ever happened that a pious Catholic at the point of death asked for a Protestant minister? We read, indeed, of many cases where Catholics, who had forsaken the Church for years and years and openly made fun of religion, have asked for a priest to come to them when they felt their end approaching. When a Catholic falls away from the Church he will be an atheist, he will believe in neither God nor devil—till death comes. Then that same religious feeling that has been dormant for years and years awakens. Suddenly that unhappy man realizes a great fear of the final outcome, and, in order to be on the safe side, he makes up his mind to call for a priest. Unless false pride of intellect keeps him back he will recall the prayers he has not said for years.

Although lukewarm or apostate Catholics may return to the Church at their end, no one will say that married life with such men is a life of happiness.

The fundamental requisite for happiness in married life is unity in that deepest of all feelings—religion. When husband and wife are not one in this most important of all matters there can be no true or lasting happiness.

Take a look into a home where the mother kneels down with her children to say the night prayers, while the father sits in his chair, smoking a pipe and reading the paper. Do you think that the children will kneel down nightly without wondering why their

father does not kneel down with them? Will they not ask in course of time why their father does not pray? Will the children not watch their father while they pray? And if they find a sneer on his lips while they pray, will it pass unnoticed? Of course the mother will excuse her husband; she will tell the children that father prays when he is alone, that now he is tired, that he is busy. The wife knows she is lying to the children to shield her husband and to avoid shocking the little ones. How long will it be till the children find out that their mother lied to them? Will that help to increase the love and respect the children should have for their parents?

Again, the children and their mother go to Confession and Communion. They fail to see their father at the altar rail. Will they not want to know the reason why father is not with them? If the mother tells her children that Easter is only five months distant and that father will go to Confession then, will that satisfy their curiosity? Next they will wonder why mother and they go to church regularly while father goes seldom or not at all. Then they will begin to argue: Our priest tells us to come to Holy Mass every Sunday, to receive the Sacraments as often as we can; now we don't see father praying, we don't see him going to church Sundays, we don't see him going to Confession and Communion; now, who is right? Is the priest right or is father right? Why does mother make us go to church when father never tells us to go? The children will form a notion that will be hard to overcome. They will think that the priest has to talk as he does, for that is his business, and that mother has notions about piety that can easily be dispensed with. Look at father; he is all right even if he does not pray as much as we. If we are as good as he, we will be good enough.

Can there be any real and lasting happiness in such a family? I

leave the answer to you, who believe that God rewards the good and punishes the wicked.

Let us suppose that the wife and children have more clothing than they can use up in ten years; let us suppose the family owns a magnificent home, that the rings the wife wears are worth a small fortune, that the family has automobiles and that all are well and healthy, yet will they be really and truly happy? They can not be. There are things that money can not buy. Happiness is one of them.

There can be no peace, no happiness without God. We may pile up gold and riches as much as we like, they will not make us truly happy. There is one spectre that haunts us—death. We see that spectre and ask ourselves: What will be after death? The very thought of death makes us forget whatever little pleasure this fleeting life may offer, and we say to ourselves if that passing show of wealth will make us unhappy for ever, we would rather serve God in poverty and wait for the reward that can not be taken from us, even by death.

Hence a family where the father is an indifferent Catholic can never be a happy family, unless he returns to his duties.

Some there may be who see a special merit in marrying a man who has grown lukewarm in his religion. Merit there is, no doubt, if a conversion is brought about. But the risk is too great. It will be far safer for you to try something easier. If his mother could not convert that man, you, in all probability will fail. Nor is that all. You are in very great danger of losing the faith yourself.

A man who does not go to Confession will not want his wife to go to Confession any too often. For one thing he may have reason to fear that his wife will tell of sins for which he is responsible, either in part or entirely. That his own crimes might remain hid-

den he will use every means to keep his wife from going to Confession.

You may have noticed that some girls of the sodality had been very frequent in the reception of the Sacraments? They were seen at the altar rail every Sunday. They marry. For a time they keep up the practice. Then they are seen once a month, finally once or twice a year. Of course, that may be a plain case of carelessness on their own part, but in many cases it is the husband who is at the bottom of this trouble. He will object to the piety of his wife for reasons best known to himself.

Shall I tell you of the constant worry a pious wife has about the spiritual welfare of her husband, when she feels that he lives in sin? How her heart must ache when she sees him going to work and must think that an accident that might take place any moment would send him to perdition for ever? Shall I tell you of the worries a pious mother has for her children who take after their father on account of the bad example he sets them? Be wise, therefore, in avoiding such a married life. Be sure that the young man who wishes to make you his wife is a practical Catholic. Be sure that he not only stands up for your faith but that he lives it, every day of his life. Then indeed you may have reasons for hoping that God will bless the union that makes him and you one.

XLII. The Unhappy Choice (*Concluded*)

My dear Children of Mary:—As a final warning against an unhappy union I would say once more: be not misled by appearances. You have been told that appearances deceive; but the warning cannot be repeated too often, nor made too insistent.

A young man who is a graceful dancer, though otherwise absolutely worthless, too often makes a short cut into the heart of an unsuspecting girl. She dances with all sorts of men, most of them more or less awkward, and then when a graceful and skilful dancer comes along and makes dancing a delicious joy, and pours words into her ear that she likes to hear, why she feels as though she could dance with him to the end of time. She begins to feel—not to think—that she has found one man, at last, into whose arms she can trust herself blindly because he is skilful and strong enough to whirl her into the fairyland where she would long to be forever.

Such silly feelings may make entertaining reading in giddy novels, but they do not fit into the reality of life. For this reason I beg of you not to make the fatal mistake of selecting your future husband on the dance floor. The chances are that this very graceful dancer has practised dancing so arduously that he found no time for work. An expert dancer, an expert lawn tennis player, may be all well and good in a way; but a young man who has to live by the work of his hands or brains has little time to become expert in these accomplishments. It requires years and years of patient and steady effort to become expert in these pastimes. Hence a young man of the laboring class can hardly become an expert in dancing and at the same time be an expert in drawing a good-sized weekly pay envelope. Unless you have enough money of your own to support

such a fop and to pay all expenses of a household, or are willing to do washing, ironing and scrubbing to earn these expenses, I should advise you not to listen to the sweet nothings that a graceful dancer may pour into your ears. Do not get tangled up with such a dandy if you do not want to make your life and the lives of your children miserable.

There is an old German proverb to the effect that a good dancer is a poor provider, and, from what you have heard on this topic, I think you will see the truth of this proverb.

Neither must you be misled by the fine clothes a young man may wear. We have a number of young men who would make good dummies for a clothing store; and that would be about all they are good for. The young man who poses as a Beau Brummel will usually be afraid to soil his beautiful hands with hard work.

And now we reach another variety of young man. In speaking about him I almost feel as though I should apologize to your intelligence. Yet a great many girls must be warned about that sort of young man. He is the handsome man. But, when a young man has nothing in his favor but his looks, by all means pass him by.

Some girls will want to pick the handsomest man they can find. They read his description in the popular novel, and that is exactly the man they are looking for. This young man must have a fair face, curly hair, dark if possible, a mustache, blue eyes, also he must be tall and graceful and possess the manners of a prince. That is the man they are looking for. Of course that sort of man lives only between the covers of a story book, and here and there one finds him on the stage, where paint, powder and wigs can do what nature has neglected to do. But these perfect men are seldom found in real life.

Do not make the mistake of selecting a young man for his looks.

You understand very well that we are not responsible for our looks. If the good Lord did give some of you good looks the merit is by no means yours. Looks alone will not bring us anything. Not looks but what we are, what we can do, is in our favor. Some of the greatest men the world has ever known would never have won a prize in a beauty contest. Lincoln was about as homely a man as could be found. Yet the world never cared about that and rather seeks the hidden charm in the moral power men wield. Rather than for a pretty face, look for a staunch and noble character, and your people will have reason to congratulate you upon your wise choice.

Without in any way trying to cater to the theories and vagaries of modern times I feel it my duty to warn you of still another error you might make, for, as the saying is, love is blind.

Before you accept the attentions of a young man you should know all you can of his family. I take it for granted that you yourself are in perfect health when contemplating marriage; if you are not healthy in mind and body you should postpone all ideas about marriage for some future day, when you will be well enough to undertake the responsibilities marriage brings with it.

Learn all you can about the family of the young man before you promise him marriage. If there is any sickness in his family, as for instance consumption in its various forms, insanity, cancer, or any other so-called hereditary or communicable disease, you will be wise in keeping at a safe distance from that young man. According to present medical research there are really few, if any so-called hereditary diseases. Still this does not remove all danger. By leading authorities we are told that sicknesses, if appearing from one generation to another, are brought about by tendencies. Hence, medical authorities say, cancer, for example, is not in a strict sense hereditary, but there is what they call a tendency for cancer in the

children of cancerous parents. Certain organisms are weaker in such cases, and the bacteria or germs that would prove harmless in a healthy person will produce cancer in cases where parents have suffered from this malady. The same holds good of all other diseases that form a scourge at the present time, such as insanity and consumption.

For still weightier reasons you must beware of the young man who leads a bad life. Much though a young man will try to conceal an impure life, nothing is harder to hide from others. A young man who leads a bad life will hardly ever escape the penalty of that kind of life, the penalty God writes upon his very forehead. I mean the dreadful disease syphilis.

Look out for the young man who has frequent sores in his face and on other parts of his body. Keep away from such as you would keep away from a man who has smallpox.

Even without such signs you can take the measure of a young man. It is very simple. Just watch him in church. A young man who goes very rarely to Confession and Communion exposes himself to criticism and suspicion. If a young man is decent and pure he will usually have no hesitation about belonging to the young men's sodality, about often receiving the Sacraments. It is when a young man has something to confess which he hates to admit, that he dislikes going to Confession. Hence the young man who does not receive the Sacraments regularly lays himself open to your suspicion. He may give you various excuses about lack of time, tiredness on Saturday evening, and so on. By these flimsy excuses he hopes to set you at rest, and to conceal his wicked, impure life. You may take this as a rule. A Catholic boy who is not pious at heart is not a pure boy. There can be no purity without piety and no piety without purity. There may once in a while be extraordi-

nary circumstances that may explain the lack of piety in a young man. He may have had a poor bringing up. Perhaps his father or mother were not doing their duty. In such cases you will usually find that a kind word and better opportunities will bring such a young man to a realization of his duties, and he will at least try to do better and will do better. An impure young man will not be reached by any kind of appeal. He will rather continue sinning, as long as he thinks he can hide the fact from you, than go to Confession. A young man who leads an impure life before marriage will not become a saint by marriage alone. If you want your heart broken and crushed, marry the young man who runs after bad women before marriage. He will usually do the same thing after marriage.

Hence do not rush into matrimony with eyes closed.

Let us suppose that, as the saying is, you fall in love with a young man whose family history is doubtful, to say the least. You may be married a few years, and then your sickly husband dies, leaving you two or three sickly children. What will you do then?

No doubt you know how careful life insurance companies are in making out policies. If they find that there is in the family a tendency for insanity, suicide, consumption, cancer, and so forth, the companies will not give a policy to children of that family.

As I remarked before, it is understood that you must be in perfect health when you get married. You have the right to ask the same of your intended husband. A good test for him is an application for a life insurance policy.

I have heard the excuse at times that one is not marrying the entire family when one marries the son. This is true enough; but the son is the product of that family and so likely as not will share in the misfortune or ailments of his people.

Hence it will be of the greatest importance for you to know the family history of the people into which you are to marry. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

The state of matrimony is not meant for all people without exception. Just because you were not called by Almighty God to enter the convent is no proof that you must marry. The vocation for the married state is in the giving of God as the vocation for a life in the convent. Hence we can take it for granted that, as God exercises His choice and judgment in calling certain souls to His special service in the convent, or at the altar, He will exercise His judgment also in calling other souls to the married life if they are fitted for that life. Others God will want to remain in the world without marriage. God has work in plenty for all people, for those in convents, for those who marry, and for those who remain single. Each one of these three states is honorable and pleasing to God, if lived in the right way.

While God will have a great reward in stores for the married couple that have raised a pious family of sons and daughters, He will have a still greater reward in store for those who remained single and preserved the priceless jewel of chastity.

If you realize that it is God's holy Will for you to marry, do so, but be sure of as good a choice as you can make with supernatural and natural aid.

Do not look either beneath nor above your own station of life. Stay among your own people, people of your own faith. Before all things pray to God for His counsel and protection. Ask your parents' advice, and make use of good common sense. Then you have reason to hope that with the blessing of God you will not go wrong in your choice.

XLIII. Duration of Courtship

My dear Children of Mary:—The present age is so eager for amusements that the impression has gained ground among young women that marriage may be postponed indefinitely, provided the young lady is taken by her suitor to as many dances, shows, excursions, parties and entertainments as she cares to enjoy. If one suitor cannot afford all these expenses the young lady will have two or three men on her staff, who can take turns in giving her a good time. Needless to say, the young lady will be careful that the young men do not get mixed in their dates, for it might be awkward if two of the suitors should call the same evening. Then she would have to go to the trouble of finding new friends, but in the meantime she makes the young men pay for the privilege of her company.

So it happens that a young woman remains undecided for years. For an excuse she will say that she wants an opportunity of studying the young men, that she wants to observe their various ways, and for that she needs time. Moreover, she is not quite decided which one of the young men she really likes.

The young men are probably in earnest and would gladly propose to her; but she is cunning enough to prevent this. In the course of time these young men will grow tired of this play and will plead other engagements when they are asked to the home of this young lady. But, no matter, the young lady finds other men willing to part with their money for her amusement, and so the dance goes on.

It stands to reason that such long and frivolous courtships cannot be productive of good results. It is common experience that the

girl of a hundred beaux will finally end with none to do her homage.

Whenever one speaks of the folly of a protracted courtship, the time worn excuse is heard that a girl should know a young man before she marries him. That is true. No sensible person will want you to marry a young man after an acquaintance of a few hours. You should by all means know the man to whom you are to trust your life, your hope and happiness. It is equally true, however, that, if you cannot read a young man like a book in the time of one year, you will not be able to fathom him in ten years, nor in a hundred years. The sooner you drop the young man of mystery, the better for you.

From whatever point you may look upon a courtship that stretches over a half dozen or more years, it must appear to no good purpose. Look at it from the point of economy. If you really love a young man and wish to marry him, why should the courtship last a half dozen years. The money the young man will spend for flowers, candies, theater tickets, excursions and presents would much better be saved to make a good start toward the first payment on a home.

Would it not be far more sensible for you to say to your intended husband, that you appreciate the presents he gives you, but that it would be far better to save the money, to marry as soon as both parties can get ready and to secure a real home of your own? You may attend theaters after marriage, whenever there is a play worth while seeing and you have the money to spare for it. Tell him that you love flowers, but that you would far rather have him save the money for a home, and then you will raise your own flowers in your little garden. That would be a common sense view, a real business proposition. From the standpoint of economy you see that a long courtship is nothing but a waste of money.

You may look at courtship from another point of view.

People who take a common sense view of life will favor an early marriage. That, of course, means a courtship of a few months and no longer.

Taking for granted that both parties are competent to assume the duties of married people, it is advisable for them to marry as soon as circumstances will permit. When the bride has just turned twenty and the bridegroom is twenty-two we have the ideal age for marriage, because the two will grow up with their children. That married couple will still be comparatively young when their children become old enough to marry. It has been observed that the bringing up of children is rendered easier when parents grow up with them. If such a married couple should live to reach the sixties, they may see their grandchildren marry, and they may have the consolation of watching the growth of their great-grandchildren in their declining years. That of itself will be a joy not given to many people.

Now let us take another example. A young man waits before marrying until he is thirty-five years or more. The bride will usually be as old as he, or nearly so, if the marriage license tells the truth. That man will be fifty years of age when his oldest child will be just about thirteen or fourteen years old. Because the ages of children and parents are so far apart there can never be the feeling of intimacy and confidence that should exist between father and son, mother and daughter. With intimacy and confidence lacking, the proper bringing up of the family remains often a hopeless task. As a last result family ties suffer thereby. The home of a neighbor will oftentimes be more attractive than the children's own home, which is finally regarded as nothing more than a boarding house.

Hence a long drawn out courtship is not only a waste of money but also a dreadful waste of time. It means the throwing away of the most precious years of your lives, years that you can never call back.

Why, then, should you throw away the best years of your lives? For the sake of knowing your intended husband you need not waste a half dozen years. Watch his conduct towards his own mother. The young man who calls his mother the "old lady" will soon call his wife the "old woman." The young man who misses Mass on Sundays for no reason whatsoever excepting laziness, who has a dozen excuses for not receiving the Sacraments, who is too lazy to work, is not the man to make you happy, however graceful he may be in dancing or playing teedle-de-winks, or some other game. The young man who uses foul language, who curses and drinks, is not the proper man for you.

In case you are unable to find out all you wish or ought to know, you have your parents. It will not take them long to find out whether a young man is worthy or not.

Do not think that life will be one everlasting picnic for you. The curse of Adam has come upon you as upon all of us. The business of life is work. The wasting of the best years of your life is a folly that no amount of regret will ever be able to make good.

XLIV. The Dangers of Courtship

My dear Children of Mary:—To show affection for those we love, in words, in looks, voice and action, is only human. It would be vain to expect of you to be cold and indifferent toward your affianced during the period of courtship. When you are engaged it is only natural and fitting that you show signs of joy and happiness, yet it is important for you to be on your guard, that your happiness may not be for you a source of sin.

What we call affection is but a tiny drop of that ocean of love that moved God to want to share His happiness with His creatures. The love of God was infinite before the birth of time, yet He desired other beings, angels and men, to share His happiness and love, in so far as they could be made capable. God created us because He loved us, and because He loved us, He made us capable of enjoying His own happiness, and of loving Him.

Love, then, the capability of loving God, is the greatest gift God could give to us. So it is that the love we have for fellow creatures is a tiny picture of that greatest of all loves, the love God has for us, His adopted children. For that reason we should understand that our love for our fellow creatures should never lead even to the slightest sin. The spark of love that God has placed in our hearts should first of all belong to God, and then to others according to God's plans for us. Hence love and sin are as far apart as west is from east.

For that reason you must be careful that the affection you feel in your heart may never end in sins against holy purity. You are engaged; but you are not yet married and you have not the privi-

leges of matrimony until you receive that holy Sacrament. A short courtship does not expose you to as many temptations as one that is extended may be for years. A long courtship ending in hurried marriage in order to shield the bride from shame and dishonor is surely not a situation desired by decent people, and not one that promises a happy marriage.

The most unfortunate girls are those who have the mistaken notion of trying to *catch* the young man of their choice. A young man in order to see you might brave the danger of a small-pox sign tacked to the door of your home without giving the consequences a single thought; but no sooner does he suspect that you are using special efforts to *land* him, than he turns from you in disgust. No matter how much he may really care for you, he cannot bear the thought of being the one courted instead of the one who courts.

Here is another rule you must observe in your conduct. It is a rule that has no exceptions to it. No young man will marry the girl that is too free and generous in showing her affection. A young man may take such a girl to theatres, suppers, and the like, and he may buy her presents, but he does this, not because he loves the girl or wants her to be his wife, but because he finds her an easy mark. The foolish girl thinks he loves her and is happy in that thought, while he already begins to tire of her. He boasts in the company of other young men that Miss So-and-so is an easy proposition, and suddenly Miss So-and-so finds that the young man of whom she was so sure has given her up.

In the mean time her reputation has suffered. Her free conduct has been talked about among certain young men. Another young man calls. She does not realize that he knows about her. However, he does. She hopes he may be the right man, but he does not

come for an honest purpose. To make sure of him she will be even more free in showing her affection. The unfortunate girl thinks she has learned a great deal in her former experience, and she will make him love her by being even more loving than before. That is exactly what he is looking for. He has heard that she is an easy mark and he merely wants to have all the fun and pleasure he can till he tires of her as did others. He has no idea of marrying that girl. When he is tired of her he will look for another easy mark.

Such a young woman is like a football. The young men play with her and then kick her to another young man. Here you have the reason why a young man will not marry the girl that permits him to take liberties with her. I regret that I must speak as plainly as I do, but in times as lax as ours it does not do to beat about the bush. You must be made to understand that your happiness hangs upon a very slender thread. Do not get the reputation that you are good enough to have fun with, but that you are not good enough to become a decent fellow's wife.

Company-keeping, or courtship, should be divided into two parts. The first part takes in the time when a number of young men among your acquaintances come to see you. At that time you have not as yet decided which one is to be your intended husband. The other part embraces the time when you have given the young man of your choice your promise of marriage. This latter part is usually called the engagement. Now let me advise you as to your conduct before and during the time of your engagement.

If a number of young men come to see you, let those who do not appeal to you at all, know, in a kindly way, that you do not care for their company. When you have no idea of marrying a man give him no encouragement of any kind, accept no presents from him under any consideration. In this way the method of elimination

must go until you have found the young man whose company you really enjoy.

If a girl accepts the attentions of a man, whom she is sure she will not marry, there is something positively wrong with that girl. If you do not care for a man let him know it in time that he may look elsewhere. A young lady always is the loser when she will tell a young man after an extended courtship that she does not want him to call again. She may have the best reasons for so doing; but people will seldom believe her. The young man will have a story of his own and he is likely to be believed.

As soon as you find that a caller is not to your liking let him know it at once. Why waste time upon him, and accept his presents, when you do not want him as husband?

During the time that you are, as it were, making your choice, you must be on your guard to keep young men in their proper place. If your parents consent you may go out with them—but under no conditions must you allow any of them the slightest liberty. In the good old times two young people were not allowed to be alone before marriage, and I would strongly advise that you for your own good insist on a chaperon.

To prevent familiarity it will be well for you to insist upon being called by your family name. If one is bold enough to call you by your Christian name it will be well for you to say that you do not give any but your parents and brothers and sisters the privilege of calling you by your first name. If the young man is of the right sort he will ask your pardon and think more of you for your dignity. If he is not of the right kind, the sooner you get rid of him, the better.

Hence be severe and preserve your dignity. The more severe you are the more you will gain the respect and esteem of respectable

men. Accept no presents, at least no valuable presents, from any man and keep them at a safe distance.

By finally allowing only him for whom you care to pay attention to you, you enter upon the second part of courtship, the engagement. Needless to say, you should have the advice and help of your parents in the process of weeding out undesirable callers. If your parents tell you of anything they have against one or another young man, you will act very wisely if you follow their suggestions and ask this young man to discontinue his calls.

XLV. The Dangers of Courtship—(*Concluded*)

My dear Children of Mary: When accepting the proposal of a young man it is understood that you should have the consent and approval of your parents.

However, if parents wish to marry their daughters to money or title and the daughters are unwilling to become the tools of such folly and ambition, they are perfectly within their rights if they follow rather the dictates of their hearts than the dictates of scheming parents. Whenever such a state of affairs exists the help and advice of your parish priest will show you the way out of the difficulty. But apart from such exceptions, it will be proper for you to ask the blessing and consent of your parents before giving to the man the answer you wish to give him.

The blessing and consent of parents having been obtained, the wedding should take place within a short time, the time needed to get your and his outfit. To have the wedding set six months or a year after the engagement is unwise. A month or two will be sufficient time in ordinary circumstances.

After the engagement has been announced it is proper for the young couple to call upon the parish priest of the bride to make arrangements for the marriage, publishing the banns, etc. The priest will consult his calendar. If the marriage can take place the day that you have intended to be your wedding day he will make the necessary arrangements for it. Do not settle upon a certain day before you see your pastor. It may be that there will be a mission, forty hours' devotion or some special appointment in the way of your marriage. During forty hours devotion and missions a wedding is always out of the question. If such matters should interfere with your plans the wedding may be set a week later or a

week sooner. Then you can get out the invitations. To issue invitations for marriage first and then change the date will be very annoying. Avoid such annoyance by consulting your pastor before setting the day of your wedding.

Now as to your conduct before marriage.

Bear in mind that you are not married until the priest marries you. Betrothal and promise of marriage do not bestow the rights or privileges of married life. Even after the banns have been published in church, even at the very foot of the altar, if either of the two have any serious reason, he or she may still withdraw. If at the very last moment the parish priest should learn of a valid reason why you should *not* be married, he must forbid you to marry.

This thought alone ought to put you on your guard. But there is another reason.

An engagement, so long as it is only a private and an informal engagement, can be broken at any time, by either party. We have, I am sorry to say, a number of young men who make a promise of marriage most readily. Likewise we have a number of young women who trust such men blindly. Too late do these young women then discover that the young man has deceived other girls. Unfortunately the world that points with scorn to such fallen girls and avoids them will readily forgive the man his base and foul conduct.

If your intended husband is a respectable man he will think all the more of you for your virtuous stand; if he is not, drop him and thank God you discovered what sort of man he is before you are married to him.

True, to keep your affections within proper bounds during the time immediately before marriage will be a severe test of strength; but others have stood this test splendidly—why not you!

Here again you behold a cogent reason why engagements should be as short as possible, so that the test may not be made harder than you can bear. The longer the engagement the more severe will that test be, and the more improbable for both to remain chaste in body and soul.

In order to receive the much needed help and grace of God in that struggle between flesh and spirit you should pray earnestly and fervently. Increase your fervor and devotion in Holy Communion, and receive the Bread of Angels even more frequently than before. Such should be your dispositions while engaged to be married.

You see then how wisely the Church acts in recommending short courtships. How much better to enter upon the state of holy matrimony after a short time of courtship, when you can give your heart and hand into the keeping of a young man who, like you, is pure in body and soul! To think that the merciful God could withhold His blessings from such a pure union would be against reason.

Hence, the Holy Spirit admonishes young people to come together not like oxen or mules who know not God, but like children of God, who enter upon this holy state of matrimony with the holy intention for which God has instituted it.

XLVI. Reasons Against Mixed Marriages. I.

My dear Children of Mary:—Before I begin to discuss mixed marriages I want you to understand that I have no objection against any Protestant man or woman. It is not from my motive of aversion or prejudice that I shall speak against mixed marriages. Protestants have their reasons against marriages with Catholics, without prejudice against Catholics. We Catholics have the same reasons for opposing marriages with Protestants.

Whenever a Catholic young woman shows an inclination to accept the attentions of a Protestant young man as prospective husband, she gives by that fact plain proof of her weakness of faith. She places religion last and her inclination first. If she were strong in faith, if she realized the full meaning and importance of the holy Sacrament of Matrimony, she would not dream of giving her heart and hand to one who necessarily must feel that her religion can never be his.

A Catholic girl who has a really living faith will want only a pious Catholic man for her husband. Hence, when we see Catholic young women preferring Protestant young men we must conclude that these same young women care nothing for their faith. Hence a mixed marriage is an evidence of a weak faith.

Let us look at this question from the viewpoint of Protestants. A Protestant young woman who is sincerely firm in her belief, feeling that her religion is the one in which God can be served best, will not encourage a Catholic young man to call on her. She has too much regard and respect for her faith as to endanger it by a union with one who is not of her faith. A Protestant young man who is devoutly attached to his faith would not think of marrying a Catholic young woman. Why, then, blame the Catholic Church

for her stand in this important question? From whatever angle we may look upon mixed marriage it presupposes a weakened faith in both parties. By what method of reasoning, then, can we hope that a mixed marriage will lead to true and lasting happiness, when all indications point to certain failure?

A young lady who for some years had been the president of a young ladies' sodality said to her friends, when she told them the news of her marriage to a Protestant: "Well, I had to get married some time, and I had to have a home some time, and what was I to do?"

Matrimony is not intended for the sole purpose of providing a young woman with a home, it is not intended to save a girl shame and disgrace, it is not intended for selfish pleasure or comfort, but for the future welfare of mankind, for the bringing up of children as children of God and heirs of heaven. That is the first and most important purpose of the married state. The question of money, of home, of honors, of comforts ar merely incidental; the real purpose of matrimony is the bringing forth of children according to the holy will of God. That this sacred duty might be made all the plainer, and that the task of bringing up a family of really pious children might not be too difficult, our dear Saviour has raised the married state to the dignity of a Sacrament, to give to parents a special grace and to help to enable them to live up to their tremendous responsibility.

For the purpose of appreciating the various good reasons which our holy Church has against mixed marriages we will review them one by one. Keep these reasons before your mind, take them to heart so that you may profit by them and avoid the misery and heartache that is inevitable in even the best of mixed marriages.

The first reason why the Church is opposed to mixed marriages

is that the Sacrament of Matrimony is one that must be received in the state of grace. Both parties must be free from mortal sin in order to receive it worthily.

Behold the scene of a mixed marriage. It takes place, not in the church, but in the priest's office. There the couple stands, all smiles. The questions the priest puts to them are very short, and all that can be expected of the two is to say: "I will." Then the priest, wearing neither cassock, surplice nor stole, pronounces them man and wife. That ends the ceremony. Then there follow hand-shaking and congratulations and the couple and witnesses leave for the celebration of the wedding. So far as the world is concerned, the match may be a brilliant one—yes, we will grant as much.

But now let us look into the hearts of the contracting parties. Will there be anything very brilliant there? Will not rather the angels of heaven weep over the loss of souls?

Let us suppose that the bride went to confession the day before, a matter to which a young woman bent on marrying a Protestant at all risks will not always give a thought. Let us take it for granted that the bride is in state of grace. What about the bridegroom who, because he is a Protestant, has no idea what it means to be in the state of grace? Even if he realizes that he has sinned grievously, has he the easy means of becoming reconciled to God by confession? Why, he sees in confession only a farce, an imposition of priests, whereby they are enabled to interfere with one's business.

Now this Protestant bridegroom receives the Sacrament of Matrimony as well as his bride. But if he is in the state of mortal sin he becomes guilty of another grievous sin by receiving one of the Sacraments unworthily.

I leave it to you to judge from what you know about our holy

faith what blessings can come from God upon such a couple. Can such a mixed marriage be put on the same level with a marriage in which both parties are pious Catholics? How then can anyone say it matters nothing whom one marries, provided one gets a comfortable home?

But if in fact this marriage was a sacrilege, the wife alone cannot undo it, and how can her Protestant husband help to undo it?

A sacrilege, it is true, may be forgiven by a subsequent worthy confession.

So it happens that the blemish of a sacrilegious marriage too often rests on a mixed marriage. And how can such an unholy marriage bring the blessings of a just God? How can such an unholy union become a lasting source of happiness? The idea is absurd. For proof of this there have been thousands of mixed marriages that ended in failure and disgrace; just so many wrecks along the path of life. For every mixed marriage that proves to remain free from harm or danger, any priest who has the care of souls can tell of ten, yea hundreds, that have *not* turned out happily.

You have been warned not to become guilty of sacrilege. You were told that Sacraments are either a blessing for us or a curse, depending upon our disposition and intention, and on our state of grace or sin. There is still another feature about the Sacrament of Matrimony that I must allude to. In this Sacrament the bridal couple are the administrators of the Sacrament. The bridegroom administers the Sacrament of Matrimony to the bride, and she administers it to him. If one is in state of sin he or she does not only commit a sacrilege by receiving the Sacrament unworthily, but commits another by administering the Sacrament unworthily. As the priest would sin mortally were he to administer a Sacrament while in the state of mortal sin, so likewise bridegroom or bride sin

mortally when they administer this great Sacrament to one another while in the state of mortal sin.

Some people accuse the Church of acting arbitrarily in forbidding mixed marriages, as though she had not the right of interfering with the free choice of people; but when you bear in mind that this same Church is the keeper and defender of the Sacraments which Jesus Christ has confided to her keeping, we need not at all be surprised at the stand she takes.

We must fear that a mixed marriage is frequently sacrilegious though the parties to it may have never intended it to be so. Looking back upon an experience of many years in the charge of souls, having in my mind the many heartbreaking instances that have come under my observation, having witnessed the misery, both temporal and spiritual, that too often comes from such unholy unions, and figuring up the loss of immortal souls, I cannot help but say that mixed marriages lead in the vast majority of cases to the sure ruin of the temporal and spiritual welfare of the married couple.

Weigh the meaning of these words, and ask yourselves what happiness you may expect from entering a mixed marriage.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

XLVII. Reasons Against Mixed Marriages.—II.

My dear Children of Mary:—The second reason the Church has for opposing mixed marriages refers to the nature of the Sacrament. As you well know, the Sacrament of Matrimony is indissoluble, that means, it is binding upon both parties until death steps in to end the union. Such is the teaching of the Catholic Church, from which the Protestant teaching differs.

Before Protestantism existed, when practically all Europe was Catholic, the Church was the only power to make any laws governing marriage. That is quite reasonable. Matrimony being a Sacrament, it stands to reason that only the Church has the right of framing any and all laws that are to govern this Sacrament. The Church, resting her authority upon her divine Founder, Jesus Christ, has always maintained that the bond uniting husband and wife could be separated only by death. Being a Sacrament, the Church has the right to determine who should be able to receive this Sacrament, and under what conditions it may be received.

When Protestantism became established, kings and states assumed rights which the Church only could rightfully claim. The so-called "Reformation" was by no means what the name implies. It stands to-day as a gigantic deformation. Instead of freeing the people from a supposed yoke of the Pope, the various Protestant countries each created its own sort of Pope to govern their people in matters of faith and morals without the least shadow of authority. And so these Protestant countries made their own laws governing marriage, including the laws of divorce. The same Protestant people who claim that the Bible is their rule of life, will not regard their Bible as the word of God, or their rule of life, when it comes

to divorce, and a number of other things that concern comfort and freedom from restraint.

Instead of confining their efforts to promoting the temporal welfare of their people, the Protestant states assumed the right of regulating also their spiritual conduct. All this interference of the state in matters that belong to the Church only was welcomed by people who considered it a victory of reason over ecclesiastical slavery, and the laws of God were reformed to an extent that they had no longer any binding force. That was the work of the Reformation.

Now let us return to the subject of matrimony. Protestant states, when they assumed the power of the Pope, made laws regulating, or rather destroying, the sacred character of matrimony.

States that have fallen away from the Church seem anxious to pass laws contrary to the ruling of the Church. They want their people to be free from the yoke of the Pope of Rome. Does it, however, make people free to have the state dictate their moral conduct? Here is the contradiction of Protestantism. It declares the Pope of Rome, or the Catholic Church, has no right of making laws in spiritual matters and with the same breath gives to the state this same right.

Christ said: "What God hath united let not man put asunder." The state does not approve of this and claims it can put man and wife asunder, by means of divorce.

Protestants say matrimony is not a Sacrament, whatever St. Paul may say to the contrary. They claim that it is a bargain between husband and wife, to be ended at the pleasure of either. The state superficially regulates marriage for them and that is enough for them.

It is true, there are numerous Protestants who believe in the sanctity of matrimony but they do so in defiance of the Protestant

claim. In considering the marriage of a Protestant we must take into account the real Protestant view of matrimony, and I ask you what guarantee has a Catholic young woman that her Protestant husband will remain true to the bond? What assurance has she that he will not leave her, when her beauty fades, to marry another, more charming, or more wealthy than she? While the Catholic wife realizes that she is his spouse until death, there is no law that compels the Protestant husband to assume such an obligation. To a Protestant it appears the most natural thing in the world that, should he so desire, he may procure a divorce and marry another woman.

The daily papers with their columns full of news about people who seek divorce, and of the frivolous or sinful reasons for which they seek freedom, ought to be an argument plain enough for any thinking being to understand that outside of the Catholic Church there is little or no sanctity attached to the state of matrimony.

Imagine what a Catholic wife and mother must feel when she sees her husband married to another woman. But her husband has obtained a legal divorce and has a right to marry whom he will. What questions will her children have to ask when they see their father living with another woman?

Where both contracting parties are Catholics both of them realize that they will be married to each other until death parts them. The bride feels happy in the thought that only death can take her husband from her.

In a mixed marriage, however, only the Catholic party has the thought, and also the duty, of entering the bond until it is broken by death. The Protestant party may have some such sentiment at the time of the wedding, but when misunderstanding arises or when the hardships of life ask for sacrifice, marriage may become to him a heavy yoke from which he is free to seek release by divorce.

And yet, in spite of the obvious truth of all this, in spite of all the grave dangers, in spite of sad examples without numbers, we see it, time and again, that Catholic girls thoughtlessly encourage the attentions of Protestant young men and marry them in total and stupid disregard of their temporal as well as eternal welfare. I willingly grant that there are many honorable Protestant men, but even the best mixed marriage is beset with grave danger and with untold mental suffering, especially when there are children.

What is on this earth the greatest consolation for Catholic married people is the certainty that they will be true to each other until death. Gladly will they bear sicknesses and poverty, hardships of all sorts and trials, because they know their love for each other will be true and faithful to the end.

Girls who enter a mixed marriage, regardless of all warnings, do so at their own peril and may not look for sympathy when they learn, to their own sorrow, that they have made the most serious mistake of their life.

XLVIII. Reasons Against Mixed Marriages. III.

My dear Children of Mary:—A priest having charge of a number of missions was asked why he did not build a church in one of them, a town of considerable size where he was accustomed to say Mass twice a month. He replied: "I have two good reasons that prevent me from building a church in that town, although I would gladly do so. One reason is that most of the parishioners there are Catholic women who married Protestant men. Their financial support of the church amounts to practically nothing. One must be glad these women come to church at all. The other reason is they either have no children, or those that have any let them go to Protestant services rather than mine, because I cannot offer them the inducements of picture shows, Sunday School picnics, and the like. I have in another place a very poor mission of but a dozen families; but I prefer to go there, where I see at least a good will, than to that mixed marriage town."

Hundreds of priests could tell a similar tale.

Who builds our churches, and schools, and hospitals and orphan asylums, and convents? Not the Catholic women of Protestant husbands. If we had to depend largely upon their support we could not build a single church or school. Where would be children for our Catholic schools, if we had to depend upon mixed marriages? Alas, the children of most such marriages are not seen in Catholic churches or schools.

I know of a little country town in the state of Michigan that counts about a hundred and fifty families. In that town there are two Protestant churches but no Catholic church. Nearly forty years ago some fifteen Catholic families came to live there. About six miles from that town there is another settlement, that already in

those days had a Catholic church and school. Unfortunately the children of these fifteen families married into Protestant families, and the children were raised as Protestants. The distance of six miles, while not too far for the old settlers, was too far for the children.

In the cemetery around the little Catholic church, six miles from that Protestant town, you find the names of the old settlers. You will find the same family names in the cemetery of the Protestant town, they are the names of the children who became Protestants, because they were the children of mixed marriages.

Of course, when a Protestant wishes to marry a Catholic, an agreement must be signed that secures to the Catholic party the freedom of living up to his or her religious duties. Moreover, the Protestant party must promise that all children resulting from the marriage will be brought up in the Catholic religion. But, then, one can write anything on paper and the paper will never protest, nor accuse the writer of signing his name to a lie. And promises are made very readily. But the keeping of these promises is another matter. Before the marriage, a Protestant will agree to almost anything; but after the priest has performed the marriage these promises are forgotten in too many cases. Then the Protestant husband asserts his rights as the head of his family and things must go his way.

I was a priest for only a few months when I met with the first of many examples in my experience as to how such promises of a Protestant husband are kept. I was asked to baptize infants at all hours of the day. These infants had to be baptized at a time when their Protestant fathers were away from home; for were they to know of this it would cause much trouble. To keep the peace of the family the children had to be brought to the rectory secretly.

Nor was it always an easy task to bring the child for baptism. The Protestant father would sometimes have his own people watch the house, for the one reason of preventing the child from being taken to church for baptism. And so it happens that in many instances these children are not baptized at all. In order to keep her husband from quarreling the Catholic wife will submit in silence. Nevertheless the promise was made and signed, but what was the good of it?

It would afford interesting reading to go to any rectory and there see the signatures of Protestant husbands who have signed agreements promising their Catholic wives freedom of going to church and of bringing up their children in her holy faith, and then to look up the parish census and compare with these agreements the names of the baptismal record and the pew-rent register. That would tell the story in a very eloquent way. In a vast majority of cases these agreements are not lived up to. There are no doubt honorable exceptions but the exception proves the rule.

In the matter of children I must dwell upon another and quite delicate point. I would not touch upon this matter were it not important and necessary. Many Protestant husbands are opposed to the purpose for which the holy Sacrament of Matrimony was instituted. This purpose is to provide for the propagation of mankind and for the temporal and spiritual welfare of the children. The Protestant husband may not recognize any obligation to accept all the children that God will grant to this couple, and then there will be either a life of sin, or else discord and, probably, divorce.

How then can the Catholic Church be pleased when Catholic girls come to be married to Protestants. Can the Catholic Church say to such: "It is all the same whom you marry. Of course, the Divine Founder, Jesus Christ, established me to bring salvation to all mankind, and to guard your souls from all harm; but if you

insist on marrying a man who does not believe what I teach, and who objects to children, or wants them brought up in his own faith, it is all the same to me." Can the Catholic Church speak in this manner and live up to her sacred duty? You know she cannot.

Mixed marriages, as a rule, do not promote the religious welfare of the children resulting from such marriages, and for that reason the Church cannot approve of them.

But even in cases where the children are baptized by a priest, their bringing up in the religion of their Catholic mother is not always an easy or pleasant task.

I have known a Protestant father who compelled, by force, his Catholic children to eat meat on Fridays. And I have known cases in which Catholic wives and children were brutally abused by the Protestant father, whenever they dared to enter a Catholic church.

Our dear Lord warned the Scribes and Pharisees that their children would be their judges. On judgment day the children will be the judges of those parents who married against the rules and the advice of holy Church, and they will condemn their Catholic mothers for having given them fathers who caused them to lose their holy faith.

XLIX. Reasons Against Mixed Marriages. iv.

My dear Children of Mary:—Protestants may claim to be ever so broadminded and liberal in all things, yet they will draw the line when it is a matter of understanding or approving of something pertaining to the Catholic Church. They may even go so far as admiring some things about the Catholic Church, its history, its firm stand, etc.; but at one thing they are sure to balk and that is—Confession. A Protestant may read the Bible from cover to cover, but the texts that should prove to him the divine institution of the Sacrament of Penance he passes without giving them a thought. A Protestant husband will not like to see his Catholic wife go to Confession, especially if he fears that she might indirectly reveal his share in some wrongdoing.

If the Catholic wife as a girl has been accustomed to receive the Sacraments frequently, her Protestant husband may soon tell her that he does not approve of her going to a priest every few weeks to tell that man her faults. He will tell her things he has heard about priests from his parents, from his ministers, and friends, and he will even refer to certain books and papers. His opinion is that Catholic priests are dangerous to deal with. "Don't get too friendly with your priests," he may tell her. "The less you go to see them, the better it will suit me."

So it happens that the Catholic wife will gradually drop away from the Church in order to please her Protestant husband.

As I have said in a former conference, the Catholic young woman who seeks a Protestant husband shows by that very fact a weakening of faith. In such cases it cannot be a surprise therefore if the Catholic wife ignores her religious duties in order to please her husband. To get him she made great efforts, and to keep him she

will sell her soul, if must be. Because she has little or no faith she places her temporal happiness over her eternal welfare. It will be another story, of course, when finally death stares such a wife in the face. Then possibly she *may* return to her faith—provided her Protestant husband has no objection.

It is extremely difficult for a Catholic wife to gain the salvation of her soul when she has to please a Protestant husband. In the first place she has very little faith to begin with, for if she really had a living and strong faith she would never for a moment think of endangering her salvation by marrying a Protestant. The gaining of heaven is difficult enough, without our adding difficulties of our own making.

Besides objecting to Confession, the husband will not be pleased with his wife going often to church. Since he gives no thought to his own salvation, he does not like his wife to remind him of church and religion. The wife may be told that religion is an expensive luxury, for which one cannot see any visible gain. Hence in cases where one party is Catholic and the other party nothing in particular, the saving of their souls becomes the last and least consideration.

Rarely will Catholic girls who are so fond of Protestant young men think of their soul, or of the hour of their death. If they had such thoughts they would be less eager for a venture that makes their gaining of heaven extremely improbable. But these deluded girls think of nothing but the pleasure of the moment. Whatever the future may betide does not give them a single uncomfortable moment. Yet, if even tiny insects like the ants show the instinct of providing for the future, should human beings to whom God gave the use of reason act less prudently? We must unfortunately admit that Catholic girls are often less sensible in their actions than the ants.

One day one of my parishioners came to the rectory with a request. Next door to him new people had moved in some time before. These people never went to church. The man appeared to be in the last stages of consumption. My parishioner had paid no attention to the new arrivals until he overheard the man asking his wife to call a priest. As time went on the pleadings of the man grew louder and urgent. The woman was heard to reply that there was no hurry, that it would be of no use, etc. Finally this Catholic neighbor could listen no longer to these pleadings and came to the rectory to tell me about it.

I went at once to the house from which those pleadings came; but when I arrived the poor man was dying. He was unable to speak or recognize me. All I could do was to give him conditional absolution and Extreme Unction, leaving the rest to God's mercy. When I had finished saying the last prayers, I asked the wife why she had not called for a priest while her husband was still able to speak. Her answer was: "I am not a Catholic and I do not believe in the humbug of Confession and Sacraments." The man was not buried from the church, evidently the wife also objected to Catholic burial. I have had to go on sick calls where the Protestant husband made the boast that he would throw out of the house bodily any Catholic priest who ever dared to enter. I never suffered any act of physical violence; yet I was made to feel that my presence was not desired. I knew there would be bitter quarreling the moment I was out of the door.

What a life a Catholic wife must lead in such a home! While she may deserve the punishment one cannot help but pity her, especially when in her last moments she must hear curses instead of prayers.

Any priest can give you many such instances. The poor woman

may have silks and satins, diamonds, pearls, rings, but money is not everything. All her pleasures, riches or honors, can never outweigh the remorse and despair of the last moments. A Catholic wife dying, surrounded by her husband and children, saying prayers for her, will have the consolation of having carried out the work of God. She knows she will not be forgotten by them in their prayers, and Communions and Masses will be offered up for the repose of her soul. What consolations has the dying wife of a husband who is a Protestant and who does not believe in what he calls the humbug of priest! What prayers will *she* get? Will her children pray for her? They may, if they have been brought up in her faith; but perhaps she has failed in this sacred duty and now has to bear the penalty. Perhaps she has been the murderer of her babies to please her infidel husband. Her soul is burdened with sin, and yet she has not the courage to incite her husband's displeasure by asking for a priest. Is it not obvious that we are compelled to say mixed marriages are a curse?

An old missionary priest, speaking about the evils of mixed marriages, held up the ritual in which the various blessings of the Church are contained. "This ritual," this saintly priest said to the young people, "this ritual contains blessings of all kinds, for all necessities. It contains blessings for sick children, for sick women, for sick people in general; it contains blessings for houses, for fruits, flowers, churches, schools, cemeteries, hospitals, ships, and even barns. If you have a sick animal, horse, cow or hog, you may call the priest and ask him to bless the sick brutes. But you can go through the book from cover to cover and you will not find a single blessing for a *damnable* mixed marriage."

You may think that such strong language is uncalled for, but in truth there is no language strong enough to condemn the wickedness

and folly of a mixed marriage as it should deservedly and rightly be condemned.

Some there may be who consider riches or comfort a redeeming feature of a mixed marriage. It may be that in many cases the Catholic wife gains social prestige, even the title of nobility, through a mixed marriage; but in almost all these cases an immortal soul is the tremendous and awful price paid for it.

In order that you, my dear Children of Mary, may never be guilty of the crimes of robbing yourselves, your children and children's children of the faith that your own pious mothers have given to you, keep away from any and all company that might lead to a mixed marriage.

L. The Ideal Marriage

My dear Children of Mary:—In describing to you the dangers of an unhappy choice I alluded to the ambition of so many girls to marry a man above their station. Young women, of course, cannot help but feel it if their parents are less fortunate in earthly success than the parents of other girls. Then, too, our free and easy means of education are liable to turn the heads of some girls. Because their parents permit them to go to high school instead of learning some useful occupation, like sewing or housework, the young ladies are easily led to think they are superior to their parents, as well as to the young men of the working class who live in their neighborhood.

Your happiness, however, will not be found in exercising unreasonable ambition. You will be usually far happier by staying among your own people. If you are a working girl, the daughter of poorly situated parents, by all means stay among the people with whom you have been brough up. If you take a tree from sunny Florida and plant it way up in icy Canada the tree will die. If you aspire to go out of your circle you will have as poor a chance as has this tree. You are not in your right element for thriving, no more than is the tree.

Do not think that because a young man goes to work with his dinner pail, exactly like your father, that he is beneath you. Your mother did not think that your father was beneath her.

But, you may ask, must we suppress all proper ambition, should not we young people try to become better off than our parents? How can there be any progress if we must everlastingly remain on the level of those who have gone before?

No one will want you to be less than your parents. We want you to try to advance, and by your own efforts and merits bring

yourselves up to a higher level. This is no more than common sense. But if you think that advancement, and progress, and all that, can be gained at one leap, by simply marrying someone who has more money than you, you are sadly mistaken.

What happiness can be in store for a wife if her husband upbraids her in such terms as: "What did you marry me for if it was not for my money! All you cared for was my money. I give you the money, and all comforts that money can buy, but for the rest I will do exactly as I like." Did the girl marry for money or love? She wanted money! she has it. Love is not there, but then, love was not in the bargain. She suffers the consequence of her folly.

Indeed, you should have ambition to better your condition and that of your children that are to be. But go about it in a common-sense way. Marry a young man of your own station; then work with might and main, save, be economical, and with the help of God you will be able to rise in the world by your own efforts.

The foolish girl, instead of looking for an industrious, sober, common-sense young man, will be misled by appearances. She will look for a good dresser, a fine dancer, and so forth, and in a few months she will discover to her regret that she has drawn an unlucky number in the matrimonial lottery. But then things cannot be undone.

To make a happy choice will require of you:

First, that you are reasonably certain that you are called to the married state.

Secondly, that you are competent to do the work a wife and mother has to perform.

Thirdly, that you lead a pure life, so that no man can point at you and say that you have been his plaything.

Fourthly, that you enter upon this state with the proper intention

of serving God, and of living up to the duties for which He has instituted this great and holy Sacrament.

Regarding the first essential, prayer is absolutely necessary. Pray earnestly and fervently, offer up holy Communions, make novenas, for the purpose of finding out what God wants you to do, and be willing to do what God wants you to do, not simply what you might like to do. If these prayers and the advice of your parents make you reasonably certain that God has intended you for the married state, ask God that He might reveal to you the man He has intended for you.

As to the second point, you should be competent to do all the work you see your mother do at home. You should know how to put up a good, wholesome meal, without more expense than you are able to afford, should know what to do with what is left over, you should be able to sew, and patch, and darn, and wash, and mend, and clean, and scrub, and bake, and at the same time be neat and tidy, so that husband and children cannot point to a better kept home than your own. Make them love their home, and you will have no trouble in keeping them there. The girl working in shop, store or factory, and unable to find time for doing the work of her mother, and the high school girl who considers housework beneath her dignity, have no right to think of marriage until they learn to do the work their mothers do. Needless to say it will take time and much application to do this work. It cannot be learned in a week or two, nor in two months.

As to the third point, you must bear in mind that purity of heart and mind are necessary conditions for a happy marriage. For how can you expect God to look down with favor upon a union that is brought about in order to hide shame and disgrace? How can you expect God to shower His blessings upon a couple that has offended

Him with joint sins the very names of which should be unknown among Christians?

It is, of course, understood that you should not make a choice without consulting your parents. Do not be led astray by glittering appearances like silly girls of the world.

Nor should finding the right man be so difficult an undertaking that you give it up in despair and marry any man who wants you. In this regard I want to remind you that two heads are better than one. The advice of your parents will be of far greater help than you may think.

The parish priest is not intended for the position of match maker; yet in singularly difficult situations he may be able to point out the right solution where it would be next to impossible for you to find it.

Having found the right man, do not drop the guards needed to protect your purity of heart and mind. See to it that the time of courtship will be as short as possible, to lessen its dangers for sin; a courtship that extends throughout a number of years is scarcely ever brought to an end without mortal sins.

As to the fourth essential, remember that God had certain purposes in mind when He instituted the state of matrimony. According to the plans of an all-wise God matrimony has not been intended for the only purpose of giving you a home, or of lessening your work or duties. Neither is it intended as a means to avoid dishonor and shame. God intended matrimony for the temporal and spiritual, remember, *spiritual,* welfare of husband and wife, and for the children resulting from that union. For that reason husbands and wives should be a help to one another, not only in a temporal but in a spiritual way as well. They should help each other in gaining heaven. They must help each other to overcome sin, must help

each other in the discharge of their sacred duties, must try by prayer and sympathy, good will and patience, to lessen and not to increase their mutual burdens.

To simply give birth to children is a duty half done. Parents must see to it also that their children are brought up rightly, for the growing generation should be made fit not only for this life but for the life to come, eternal life. Children are a gift of God and He will demand them back from the hands of the parents.

The ideal marriage! What is it! Look at an old, old couple, ever true to the service of God, and surrounded by grown-up sons and daughters who each have established their own families. The old couple looks back upon long years lived in storm and sunshine, in sufferings and consolations, a life well spent, because spent as God has ordained it. They look upon their sons and daughters with lawful pride, because they have raised them up to be pious children of God, have instructed them to keep the Commandments of God. Now they watch with loving care how their grandchildren in turn profit by this training.

There is the ideal of a Catholic family, the ideal, that you should try to realize in your own life.

The Angel of Death will soon approach this old couple, and they will be willing to follow the summons, because they know they shall hear the voice of One lovingly and mercifully greeting each of them with the words: "Come to thy glorious reward, thou good and faithful servant!"

Date Due

8354 248.48 K72
Kuehnel, Reynold
AUTHOR
Conferences for Young Women
ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY